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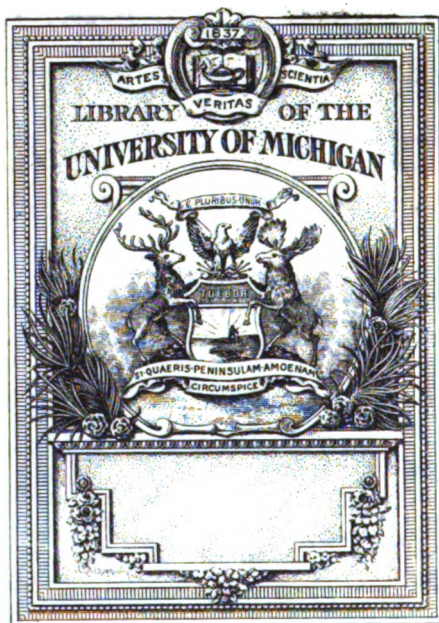
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# Lives of the English martyrs declared blessed by ...

Bede Camm



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ENGLISH MARTYRS BEATIFIED  
BY POPE LEO XIII.

QUARTERLY SERIES. HUNDREDTH VOLUME.

**ROEHAMPTON :**  
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# LIVES OF THE ENGLISH MARTYRS

DECLARED BLESSED BY POPE  
LEO XIII. IN 1886 AND 1895

WRITTEN  
BY FATHERS OF THE ORATORY, OF THE  
SECULAR CLERGY AND OF THE SOCIETY  
OF JESUS

COMPLETED AND EDITED BY  
DOM BEDE CAMM, O.S.B.  
OF ERDINGTON ABBEY

VOLUME I.  
MARTYRS UNDER HENRY VIII.

*IN SERVIS SUIIS  
CONSOLABITUR DEUS*

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**FR. JOANNES CHAPMAN, O.S.B.,**

**CENSOR DEPUTATUS.**

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*Die 29 Aprilis, 1904.*

## A DEDICATION.

140  
100  
1-13-38 J.A.  
FISHER and More! in you the Church and State  
Of England—England of the years gone by—  
Her spiritual law, her civil equity,  
Twins of one justice, for the last time sate  
On equal thrones. 'Twas England's day of fate :  
Ye kenned the omens and stood up to die :  
State-rule in Faith, ye knew, means heresy :  
That truth ye wrote in blood, and closed debate  
By act, not words. A blood as red, as pure,  
They shed, that brave Carthusian brotherhood,  
St. Bruno's silent sons. Martyrs! be sure  
That o'er the land, thus doubly dyed and dewed,  
The Faith your death confessed, shall rise renewed—  
A tree of peace for ever to endure.

AUBREY DE VERE.



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<sup>1</sup> By an oversight, not noticed till the type had been broken up, this article precedes instead of following the next.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### Section I. *Beatification.*

IN presenting the lives of these English Martyrs to the reader, it will be useful to point out as briefly as may be, what is meant by the title "Blessed" which is given to them, and how they came to receive it.

The Catholic Church venerates the memory and invokes the aid of those great servants of God who have passed within the veil, leaving behind them a renown for remarkable sanctity, but she does not show to them any public honours until their cultus has been solemnly approved by the Holy See; in other words, until their reputed virtues and miracles have been subjected to a long and rigorous examination and have passed through the ordeal unscathed. Then by a solemn decree the Church proposes these servants of God to her children as models of heroic virtue and as powerful intercessors with Him. The process of canonization has indeed differed at various stages of the Church's history. In the earliest times it remained in the power of the Bishops as Ordinaries to pronounce on the cause

of those who had lived within their jurisdiction, but it was felt comparatively early that a tribunal which could not be swayed by local feeling would be at once more impartial and more authoritative, and from the tenth century we find this investigation reserved as of right to the Roman Pontiffs. Alexander III. in 1170 decreed that it was not lawful to honour any person publicly as a Saint without the consent of the Holy See.

But the most important legislation on this subject dates from Urban VIII., who in the year 1634 issued a famous Bull in which the process of canonization is minutely prescribed. It will be sufficient here to explain that this long process, which generally lasts a century and more, may be divided into three principal stages. In the first the Bishop of the diocese, where the servant of God is honoured, collects evidence by what is called an "Informative" or "Ordinary Process," in order to satisfy the Holy See that the cause is deserving of attention in the Pope's own Court. If this is found satisfactory at Rome the Pope then issues a decree ordering the cause of "the venerable servant of God" to be "introduced" before the Sacred Congregation of Rites. From this point the servant of God is described as "Venerable" and may be so invoked, but in private only.

In the second stage, which passes at Rome, a long and stringent examination takes place of the writings (if any exist), of the virtues, and of the miracles ascribed to the Venerable Servant of God. The "Postulators" of the cause are those who

are appointed to plead in his favour, the "Promoter of the Faith" (popularly known as the "Devil's Advocate") is the official whose duty it is to point out any flaws or weak points in the evidence adduced. If the result is favourable the final step is to issue a decree of Beatification, which is solemnly promulgated on an appointed day in the Basilica of St. Peter's.

The Blessed Servant of God (or *Beato*) can now be publicly venerated. But the veneration shown him is limited and partial; that is to say, his cultus is permitted in a certain country or diocese or religious order, but not throughout the Universal Church. His picture and relics are allowed to be exposed (in a secondary place) on the altars of the Church in those parts but not elsewhere, and it is only within these limits that the recitation of his Office and Mass is permitted. The cultus of a canonized saint, on the other hand, belongs to the Universal Church, and churches and altars can be freely erected in his honour in any part of the world.

For Canonization further investigations are necessary. It must be proved that two more miracles have been worked through the intercession of the *Beato*<sup>1</sup> since the decree of Beatification. When these have been submitted to a like searching investigation and declared to be proved, the

<sup>1</sup> It will not be necessary that miracles should be worked at the intercession of each of the 63 *Beati*. It will be sufficient, for the progress of the cause in its present stage, if those who ask for graces, beg the intercession of "all the Blessed and Venerable Martyrs of England."

splendid ceremony of Canonization can take place, in which the Pope during his solemn Mass, declares and ordains that the servant of God in question shall be inscribed in the register of the Saints, and that his memory shall be celebrated on a given day throughout the Church of God.

Such, in brief, is the process by which the Catholic Church raises to her altars those who have glorified God by the splendour of their sanctity, and on whose blessed lives and deaths the seal of the Divine approval has been set by the manifestation of miraculous signs.

It must not, however, be supposed that this process has been gone through in the case of the 63 English Martyrs whose lives form the subject of this work. Every rule has its exceptions, and here is a case in point. When Urban VIII. completed the legislation of his predecessors by drawing up the elaborate rules which have ever since formed the practice of the Church in the proclamation of the sanctity of her illustrious children, he made certain significant and important exceptions. He declared "that he did not wish to prejudice the case of those servants of God who were the objects of a cultus arising out of the general consent of the Church, or an immemorial custom, or the writings of the Fathers, or the long and intentional tolerance of the Apostolic See, or the Ordinary."

In such cases the Holy See is wont to grant a decree of "equipollent" or equivalent beatification, or as it is sometimes called, *per modum casus excepti*; by which she recognizes that the cultus of

the servant of God in question has already been sufficiently approved of, and that the honours due to a *Beato* may be freely granted him.

Such was the procedure adopted in the case of our 63 Blessed Martyrs.

At first, indeed, it seemed that no exception to rules of Urban VIII. could be proved in their favour. After many such attempts had failed, the zeal and perseverance of the late Father Morris, S.J. (who may justly be called the Apostle of our Martyrs), triumphed over the great difficulties in the way of beginning the long Process in the usual form. In June, 1874, the late Cardinal Manning, as Ordinary of the diocese of Westminster, formally opened the Process, and the Court was held with all due formalities, thanks mainly to the zealous co-operation of the Fathers of the London Oratory. Witnesses as to the lives and fame of the martyrs were heard, and their depositions, together with a duly certified copy of the acts of the court, were forwarded to Rome for examination.

The original Process contained 353 names, and after a delay of 12 years, the Promoter of the Faith finally assented to the introduction of 309 of these. The remaining 44 are called *dilati*, as the introduction of their cause was delayed for further proof as to martyrdom. They are mainly confessors who died in prison, and the ground of objection is generally that, though they died there, it has not been proved that their death was caused by the rigours of their imprisonment.

While, however, the clients of our martyrs were



resigning themselves to a long and tedious process which promised to last many years, an unexpected consolation was granted them in the equippollent beatification of fifty-four of the number.

In the Pontificate of Gregory XIII. a series of frescoes representing English saints and martyrs were painted in the church of the English College at Rome, at the expense of George Gilbert, a gentleman who had been the devoted friend of the Blessed Edmund Campion. To these pictures were added, by permission of the Pope, others, representing the modern martyrs who suffered under Henry VIII. and Elizabeth between the years 1535 and 1583. These frescoes were painted by Circiniani, the well-known artist who also depicted the sufferings of the primitive Christians in a most realistic manner on the walls of San Stefano Rotondo. Our frescoes had indeed unfortunately perished at the French Revolution, but happily a book of engravings of them was brought out with the Pope's privilege (*cum privilegio Gregorii XIII.*), and it is to this book that we owe the Beatification of Sir Thomas More and his companions.

The fact that these martyrs were allowed to be represented on the walls of a church together with canonized saints, was declared to be equivalent to granting them an ecclesiastical cultus, and to form one of the cases excepted from the decree of Urban VIII. The title-page of the book speaks of them as "Holy martyrs who for Christ's sake and for professing the truth of the Catholic faith, have suffered death in England both in ancient and

of the enforcement of the laws enjoining attendance at the Protestant churches.<sup>1</sup> For a week the tide of success flowed with them. Then fortune changed, and three weeks later not one of the Northerners maintained the field.

#### Section IV. *The Excommunication.*

Three months after the Rising came the excommunication of the Queen. Pope Pius V. had not been unaware of the discontent which had been fermenting in England, but,—and this is a point very much to be remembered,—he was far removed from regular and reliable sources of information. Letters from the English Catholics to him, and his answers, might take two, three, or even four months on their way,<sup>2</sup> and thus it was very difficult for him to know exactly what to do, still more so to choose the right moment for action. In the year 1568 he had sent Doctor Nicholas Morton, once prebendary of York, to report on the state of affairs in England, and Morton had started back a few months before the actual outbreak, with the news that an insurrection was not impossible. But while he was on his way Sir William Cecil had brought the discontent prematurely to a head, and the Rising was over and crushed, before the Pope had so much as heard of the likelihood of its breaking out.

When he did hear of that probability, he took a step characteristic of the man and the time. Those were days in which a wonderful renewal of fervour was taking place in Rome. The utmost zeal was

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Calendar*, 1568—1579, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> P. 156.

being evinced for restoring ancient observance, and the greatest benefits were resulting from the return to pristine severity and mediæval practices. Hence the idea that the remedy for England was a drastic measure of primitive discipline. The previous Pope, Pius IV., had taken the advice of the Catholic powers as to the excommunication of Elizabeth, and finding them most hostile to any such measure, had decided to proceed no further. But Pius V., far less cautious than Popes usually are, was also, alas! far too sanguine in trusting the few English exiles who happened to be in Rome. He summoned these men to a court held to inquire into Elizabeth's offences, which were of course as plain and as grave as they could possibly be. He thereupon issued his Bull, *Regnans in excelsis*, on the 25th of February, 1570, by which he both excommunicated her and deprived her of her realm, believing that the sentence would at once be put into execution. Only after this was done did he hear of the collapse of the Rising. Thus the clauses which concerned the deprivation, resulted in complete failure<sup>1</sup> and did actual harm. The excommunication in itself, however, did no little good to the Church at large, and to the Catholics in this country in particular. For whereas we have seen that the greatest of all snares for the English Catholics had been their blind obedience to their sovereign, even in matters of faith and conscience, the excommunication of that sovereign did much

<sup>1</sup> There were indeed complications in England for a couple of years after the excommunication, but they had no influence on the general course of our history. (See *The Month*, February, 1902.)

more recent times." Thus Pope Gregory XIII. had allowed these servants of God to be honoured as true martyrs for the faith, and Pope Leo XIII. graciously confirmed this concession. A decree of the Congregation of Rites, on the 4th of December, 1886, decided that fifty-four martyrs who were clearly represented in the frescoes were worthy of equipollent beatification, and on the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, December the 29th of the same year, Pope Leo confirmed the decree.

Moreover, on the 9th of the same month the Pope signed the introduction of the cause of 261 English Martyrs, who were henceforth honoured as *Venerable*, and whose cause, with the exceptions hereafter to be noted, must proceed according to the ordinary formalities prescribed by Urban VIII.

The joy caused among English Catholics by the decree of Beatification was indeed deep and sincere. It was felt, however, that if the martyrs were to be duly honoured their lives must be made better known, and it was soon after the proclamation of the Roman decree that the Fathers of the London Oratory, who had done so much for the cause, projected this series of lives which, owing to various difficulties, has only now reached its completion. But of this we must speak later.

There was one disappointment with regard to the decree of 1886. The names of the three Benedictine Abbots of Glastonbury, Reading, and Colchester, who, with some of their monks, were represented as martyrs in the frescoes, were omitted from it just at the last moment, owing to a scruple of the

Promoter of the Faith. These martyrs were not mentioned by name in the inscription beneath their picture, which merely spoke of "Three Reverend Abbots of the Order of St. Benedict with some of their monks." The Promoter of the Faith feared that this was not sufficient to identify the martyrs, and so the names were omitted, so much at the last moment that some copies of the decree with their names included actually got into circulation. But a further examination of the question brought such satisfactory evidence, that nine years later (May 13, 1895), a decree was promulgated which included among the *Beati* not only the three Abbots and their monks, but also Sir Adrian Fortescue, of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland.

This raised the number of *Beati* to sixty-three, but reduced the number of *Venerabiles* to 253.

The decrees themselves will be found printed in full at the end of this Introduction.

It must be carefully noted that a decree of equipollent Beatification like ours is permissive in character. It confirms an ancient cultus and formally permits the faithful in England to honour their martyrs with public veneration. Such a decree of course is of grave significance, and is not granted lightly. Nevertheless the searching and stringent inquiries which are necessary, according to the ordinary process, have not been undertaken in such a case, and though, of course, a great deal of investigation has been made with regard to each individual among the sixty-three martyrs involved,

still the Roman authorities would be far from considering such investigations as formally complete.

When the cause of these *Beati* is presented for canonization the case of each individual will be inquired into as searchingly, as if they had not advanced further than the stage of *Venerabiles*. We not only cannot tell whether all will ever be canonized, but we do not even know what the verdict of the Church will be when she has thus formally examined their merits. It is quite possible that if adverse evidence should be found as to any individual his name may be struck off the list of *Beati*. The Roman authorities do not consider themselves irrevocably committed to each of the sixty-three names which are now in the Decrees. It is indeed incredible that there should be a thought of going back on the well-known martyrs, who give their names to the cause. But with some of their more obscure followers the case is different.

A serious student of these pages will find without difficulty among this glorious band of martyrs one or two whose claims seem notably weaker than those of the rest. The names of John Haile and John Felton,<sup>1</sup> for instance, were not included in the original process as sent to Rome by the Ordinary. They, and one or two others, were added at Rome, simply because they were included in the pictures that brought about the Beatification. But it may conceivably happen that when their cases are subjected to the stricter scrutiny which awaits them, they may not be considered worthy of so lofty a place in

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 17—26, and vol. ii. p. 1.

the Church's roll of honour. It is again quite possible that some piece of evidence, which was unknown at the time of the decree but which has since come to light, may seriously affect the claim of one or other of our martyrs. An instance in point would be that of the Abbot of Colchester.<sup>1</sup> Still, when all things are duly weighed, we may venture to state our humble belief that further investigation will only serve to enhance the merits and increase the glory of these Blessed Martyrs of our race. That one star should differ from another in glory will not surprise us, but that in spite of human frailty Divine grace should have wrought such triumphs of faith and constancy in our land cannot but fill our hearts with gratitude to God and admiration for His servants.<sup>2</sup>

## Section II. *History of the Persecution.*

Although the history of the period is well known, it may perhaps be permitted me to remind the reader of the causes which led to the martyrdom of so many of England's noblest sons. The martyrs, whose lives are contained in this first volume, all suffered during the last twelve years of the reign of Henry VIII. And it will therefore be necessary to examine, as briefly as may be, the trend of events

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> The standard authority on the subject of Beatification and Canonization is Pope Benedict XIV., *De Beatificatione et Canonizatione Sanctorum*. The subject of Beatification *per modum casus excepti*, will be found, lib. i. c. 32; lib. ii. cc. 17—24.

For the proceedings in the Beatification of the English Martyrs see Father J. Morris, *The English Martyrs*, in *The Month*, 1887, pp. 1—17, 524—537; same author, *The Pictures of the English College at Rome*, 1887, and Father Pollen, *Life of Father J. Morris*, 1896, pp. 194—217.

which led to the sacrifice of the best and purest blood of England, and to attempt to show how the downward career of a self-willed and arbitrary monarch was marked at every stage by the heroic resistance of men who preferred to die rather than to abandon the faith of their fathers and the unity of Christ's holy Catholic Church.

In the following *conspectus* of the course of events an attempt will be made to show, briefly but distinctly, the various phases of the fall of Henry VIII. and of the persecution which resulted from that fall, and thus to help the reader to understand how the various sufferings of these servants of God are connected with the history of this period and with each other.<sup>1</sup>

### (1) The Persecutor.

"Who could have supposed in the latter days of Henry VII.," writes Dr. Gairdner, "that an extreme time of trial was near? How could such a thing have been credited even in the early days of Henry VIII., who, if tradition be not misleading, had himself been intended for the Church before his

<sup>1</sup> For the general history of the period the reader should refer to Dr. James Gairdner's admirable work, *A History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, chapters i.—xii. (1902), as well as to the same writer's essay on the reign of Henry VIII. which forms the thirteenth chapter of the volume on *The Reformation* recently published in the *Cambridge Modern History* (vol. ii. 1903). These works have in some measure supplied the want of which Mr. Birrell complained some years ago in memorable words. "The ugliest gap in an Englishman's library is in the shelf which ought to contain, but does not, a history of the Reformation of Religion in his own country." (*Res Judicata*, 1902; *The Reformation*; reprinted in *Collected Essays*, vol. ii. p. 197, 1899.)



brother Arthur's death, and expected one day to be Archbishop of Canterbury? Indeed, putting tradition aside, we know quite well that Henry VIII. had all his days a taste for theological subtleties, and probably could not have done the things he did, but that he was fully competent to argue points—of course with most royal persuasiveness—against Tunstall, Latimer, Cranmer, and any divine in his kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

Henry himself did not approach a decisive breach with the Holy See, of which he had formerly gloried to be the champion, without some reluctance. “No King,” writes Gairdner, “was at first more desirous to stand well in the opinion of his own subjects; nor could it be said that the Church's yoke was a painful one to mighty potentates like him. But wilfulness and obstinacy were very strong features in Henry's character. Whatever he did he must never appear to retract; and he had so frequently threatened the Pope with the withdrawal of his allegiance in case he would not grant him a divorce, that at last he felt bound to make good what he had threatened. For the first time in history Europe beheld a great prince deliberately withdraw himself and his subjects from the spiritual domain of Rome, and enforce by the severest penalties the repudiation of Papal authority. For the first time also Europe realized how weak the Papacy had become when it proved unable to punish such aggression. Foreign nations were scandalized, but no foreign prince could afford lightly to quarrel with England. Henry was considered an enemy of Christianity much as

<sup>1</sup> *History of the English Church*, p. 5.

was the Turk, but the prospect of a crusade against him, though at times it looked probable, always vanished in the end. Foreign princes were too suspicious of each other to act together in this, and Henry himself by his own wary policy continued to ward off the danger. He was anxious to show that the faith of Christendom was maintained as firmly within his kingdom as ever. He made Cranmer a sort of insular Pope, and insisted on respect being paid to his decrees—especially in reference to his own numerous marriages and divorces. But beyond the suspension of the Canon Law and the complete subjugation of the clergy to the civil power, he was not anxious to make vital changes in religion ; and both doctrine and ritual remained in his day nearly unaltered.”<sup>1</sup>

This last statement needs some qualifications. It is true that Henry did not desire to make sweeping changes of dogma. But he removed the key-stone of the arch, by the repudiation of the Papal Supremacy, and even in his own day there were ominous signs of the ultimate fall of the structure. Under the influence of Cromwell and Cranmer, as we shall see, he went far in the direction of heresy as regards the honour due to the Saints, and to their sacred images and relics. But the truth is that “State-rule in faith means heresy,” and that truth the history of England under Henry and his children most abundantly manifested. The martyrs saw this clearly, but the majority of the people were for a time deceived, and it needed the Protestant excesses under Edward VI. to open their eyes completely.

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ii. pp. 463, 464.

Up to the time of the ill-fated divorce, Henry was undoubtedly a strong Catholic. We read of his piety, of his habit of hearing four or five Masses every day, of a pilgrimage to Walsingham, the last few miles of which he walked barefoot, of his zeal against heresy and of his writing theological treatises. In 1518 he composed a treatise on the question whether vocal prayer was necessary to a Christian, which however does not appear to have come down to us. But three years later he was engaged on a still more remarkable work. This is the famous *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, which he wrote in 1521 in answer to Luther's scurrilous *Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, and which won for its royal author from the Pope the title of "Defender of the Faith," which is still borne, somewhat illogically, by his successors. In this work Henry wrote so strongly in support of the Pope's supreme authority in the Church, that even More was startled. The book is an able one, and there is no reason to doubt that it was really Henry's own work and that it expressed his most sacred convictions. No prince was at first more devoted to the Holy See than he who was destined to withdraw himself and his subjects from the unity of the Church.

(2) Divorce, the Turning-Point.

The turning-point of Henry's life as of the spiritual destinies of our country was the divorce from Catherine of Arragon. The fact that for England at least

The Gospel-light first dawned in Boleyn's eyes,

is naturally an unpalatable one to many; but it is one which nevertheless must be admitted to be irrefutable by all impartial observers. It was certainly not denied at the time by those who gloried in the religious changes which had been the outcome of Henry's matrimonial difficulties. Witness, *e.g.*, Aylmer, Bishop of London, one of Elizabeth's most zealous prelates. He writes as follows: "Was not Quene Anne the mother of this blessed woman [Elizabeth] the chief, first, and only cause of banyshing the beast of Rome with all his beggarly baggage? I take not from King Henry the due praise of broching it, nor from that lambe of God King Edward, the finishing and perfighting of what was begon, though I give hir, hir due commendacion. I know that that blessed martir of God Thomas Cranmer, byshop of Canterbury, did much travaile in it, and furthered it. But if God had not given Quene Anne fauour in the sight of the Kinge, as He gave to Hester in the sight of Nabuchadnezar (*sic*), Haman and his company, the Cardinal, Wynchester, More, Rochester, and other, wold sone have trised up Mardocheus with all the rest that leaned to that side. Wherefore though many deserved muche praise for the helping forward of it; yet the croppe and roote was the Quene, which God had endued with wisdome that she coulde, and gyven her the minde that she would do it."<sup>1</sup>

The chief modern historian of Anglicanism admits that "the rejection of the Papal Jurisdiction

<sup>1</sup> *An Harborough for faithful subjects*, sig. B, iv. b, *apud* R. S. Maitland, *Reformation*, 209—210.

and the assumption of the title of Supreme Head by the King, were the consequences of the divorce."<sup>1</sup> It is true that he adds that "England remained still a Catholic country after those great changes," but he uses the word Catholic in a different sense to that in which the rest of the world understands it. And in any case the revolution in doctrine soon followed the rejection of Papal Supremacy, and Edward VI. and Elizabeth only completed their father's work. If proof were needed of the necessity of adhering to the centre of unity, the subsequent history of the English Reformation would furnish sufficient.

The testimony of the Catholic martyrs does not differ on this point from that of the Protestant Reformers. We may refer to the words of the Blessed Abbot of Colchester as a case in point. (p. 394.)

If modern witnesses are needed, we can bring forward one who is above exception, who is not, be it observed, a Catholic partisan, but a Protestant historian, and the one man who of all living authorities is by far the most competent to speak as to the facts in question.

Dr. James Gairdner wrote to the *Guardian* on the 17th of February, 1899, on "The Origin of the Reformation" as follows: "In Mr. Hutton's view the divorce of Henry VIII. had nothing to do with the Reformation! When a gentleman of Mr. Hutton's attainments is able seriously to tell us this, I think it is really time to ask people to put

<sup>1</sup> Dixon, i. 30.

two and two together, and say whether they find the sum can be anything but four. It may be disagreeable to trace the Reformation to such a very ignoble origin; but facts, as the Scottish poet says,<sup>1</sup> are fellows that you can't coerce (I translate from a dialect still rather imperfectly known in this latitude), and that won't bear to be disputed. . . . Talk of the intolerable tyranny of the "See of Rome! Who felt it, I wonder? Who complained of any such oppression? Not Henry VIII. himself till he felt himself disappointed in the expectation, which he had ardently cherished for a while, that he could manage by hook or by crook, to obtain from the See of Rome something like an ecclesiastical licence for bigamy. The See of Rome refused this, and, when Henry at length took the matter into his own hands by marrying Anne Boleyn, pronounced quite a righteous sentence that the former marriage was valid. All that the Pope could be reproached with was far too great deference to an unprincipled Sovereign, and very mischievous temporizing in the vain hope that he would lay aside self-will and return to his obedience. But self-will was the strongest motive of Henry VIII.—even stronger than his passion for Anne Boleyn, which, when gratified, very soon began to decline."

The true history of Henry's first divorce has been greatly elucidated of late years by writers like Brewer, Friedmann, and Ehses. The last named

<sup>1</sup> Facts are chieils that winna ding,  
And downa be disputed. (Burns.)

has published the documents on the subject from the Vatican archives, and has thus thrown a flood of light on the history, of which subsequent writers, and notably Gairdner, have fully availed themselves. The story is now clearly laid before us in all its shameful and sordid details, and the result is that Henry's perfidy and wilfulness stand out in sharper relief than ever. Nor does Wolsey show to any advantage throughout the transactions. His one aim was to save himself, and to this end he was willing to resort to measures which little became an ecclesiastic and still less a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. It is true that he was far from being a willing agent in the matter, but that cannot excuse the mingled treachery and bullying arrogance with which he sought to extort from the Holy See concessions, which, if granted, would have disgraced it for ever in the eyes of Christendom.

As to the Pope, who had but just escaped from captivity after the barbarous sack of Rome by the imperial troops, his position was indeed a most difficult and trying one. "The Pope and Cardinals were fully on their guard," writes our historian, "in dealing with the embassy of Gardiner and Foxe, 1528, and while apparently the former at least never allowed the smallest expression of resentment to escape him at the effrontery of Gardiner's demands, lest he should alienate a powerful sovereign, both he and they were alike determined never to make such concessions as would allow injustice to be done with the sanction of the Holy See. . . . The fear of the Emperor was a frequent taunt, partly admitted as a

fact, and at times even put forward by the Pope himself as an excuse for non-compliance with the demands of the English. But no such fear we may be well assured could have affected the decision of the Pope's advisers as to whether a certain process was regular or not."<sup>1</sup>

### (3) Proceedings in the Divorce.

The main facts to bear in mind are the following. Henry married Catherine of Arragon, his brother Arthur's widow, the 11th of June, 1509. On the 28th of June, 1505, however, Henry who was about to attain his fifteenth year, when the marriage was by treaty to have been celebrated, had made (no doubt by his astute father's direction) a formal protest against it, declaring that it had been arranged without his consent and that he refused to ratify what had been done in his minority. But this was only a diplomatic move to force King Ferdinand to pay the remainder of the marriage portion. It was after his father's death, and therefore certainly by his own free will that Henry married Catherine.

All went well for some years, though Catherine bore no son who survived infancy, and Henry was anything but a faithful husband; until sometime in the year 1526 Henry had become so deeply enslaved

<sup>1</sup> *New Lights on the Divorce of Henry VIII.*, by James Gairdner, *English Historical Review*, vol. xi. (1896), pp. 673 *et seq.* See also the *American Catholic Quarterly*, April, 1904, "Clement VII., Campeggio, and the Divorce," by Father H. Thurston, S.J.



by Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, that he began seriously to contemplate putting away his wife in order to marry this woman. The fact is more extraordinary as he had already debauched Anne's elder sister Mary.

With characteristic cunning, however, he kept his real intentions carefully concealed even from Wolsey, and only affected to have scruples as to his marriage with his brother's widow. Wolsey who had no idea how far the King had already committed himself in his love letters to Anne, did not for some time penetrate his real purpose in the matter. He therefore suggested that a private collusive suit should be heard at his house before himself and Archbishop Warham, and this actually took place in the spring of 1527, Henry being cited to defend his marriage against objections that had been raised against it, and appearing before the court to do so on May the 17th. On June the 22nd, he startled and shocked his wife by telling her that they must part company, as he found by the opinion of divines and lawyers that they had been living in sin.

It was agreed between the conspirators that the odium of having first suggested doubts as to the validity of the marriage should be thrown on the Bishop of Tarbes who had come to England, in February, 1527, to negotiate an alliance against the Emperor. This story Wolsey had the effrontery to tell Bishop Fisher and Archbishop Warham, adding that the King himself far from wishing for a divorce was only desirous of knowing the truth. These interviews took place on Wolsey's journey as he made

his way to France in July, ostensibly to confirm the alliance with Francis I. and privately to confer with that monarch on "the King's secret matter." (See pp. 66 and 176.) If, however, Wolsey had not treated his venerable colleagues with common honesty he was in his turn deceived by the King. He understood that he was commissioned not only to hint that Catherine would be divorced, but also to put forward a project for marrying Henry to Renée, daughter of Louis XII.

Meanwhile Henry began negotiations with Rome behind the Cardinal's back, and the real facts of the case were only fully made clear to that statesman on his return from France, when he had the mortification of having to give an account of his mission in the presence of Anne Boleyn, who now began to assume the airs of a Queen. (See p. 178.)

It is not necessary here to detail the tedious negotiations with the Court of Rome, but it is important to remember that Henry's "scruples" as to his marriage with his brother's wife were meant to clear the way for a marriage to which there was "precisely the same obstacle further aggravated by incest." At present, however, the King did not maintain that cases like that of Catherine were opposed to divine law and could not be dispensed at all. He only argued that there were certain flaws in the dispensation of Pope Julius, which taken in conjunction with his own previous protestation against the marriage, rendered it ineffective.

His agents, Knight and Casale, succeeded indeed in extorting from the wearied Pontiff a promise to

grant the marriage dispensation which Henry asked for. Its form was so ample that in virtue of it, he might have contracted even with the sister of a former mistress, and so might have wedded Anne Boleyn. But when attentively read it was found that the engagement was useless to him as it presupposed that his previous marriage had been declared null. They could not however extract from the Holy See the desired commission to refer the question of the validity of the marriage to Wolsey without any appeal to Rome being allowed. Such a demand was, as Dr. Gairdner says, "preposterous," and indeed Henry's eagerness to obtain this extraordinary dispensation beforehand was a serious blunder on his part, as it put the Pope and Cardinals on their guard, and opened their eyes to the King's real object.

Gardiner and Foxe, however, who were sent by Wolsey in 1528, succeeded in persuading the Pope to send a Legate commissioned jointly with Wolsey to try the case in England. The Legate, Cardinal Campeggio, arrived in England on the 7th of October, 1529.

Campeggio had instructions to try to turn the King from his purpose, and if that was impossible to persuade the Queen to enter a nunnery. But he soon found that both attempts were hopeless. Moreover Catherine's case was even stronger than he had supposed. To his surprise the Queen showed him a document which left no doubt as to the validity of the marriage, supposing that the Pope had the power to dispense at all, as even Henry did

not then deny. This was the copy of a brief preserved in Spain, by which Julius II. had given, at the earnest request of Queen Isabella, then on her death-bed, a full dispensation for the marriage, assuming that the previous marriage with Arthur had really been consummated. Henry knew well that as a fact it had not, but he hoped that Catherine's word as to this would not be admitted as evidence and the revelation of the existence of this brief was a serious blow to him. Wolsey, too, was greatly perplexed. The King and he put forward reasons for believing the brief to be a forgery, and made desperate efforts to get the original document into their own hands. They obliged the Queen to write herself to the Emperor, asking, as if in her own interest, that the brief might be sent to her. The messenger who took this letter was the Blessed Thomas Abel, one of her chaplains. (See p. 463.) He, however, knew the truth of the matter well, and immediately he reached Spain he took care to inform the Emperor that the Queen had been coerced into writing against her will. Thus the attempt failed.

The Cardinals at last opened their Legatine Court at Blackfriars, on May the 31st of the next year, 1530. It is well known how the Queen appeared before the Court and made her appeal to Rome. At the fifth session, on June the 28th, Blessed John Fisher astonished everyone by coming forward and presenting a written book, the result of two years' study, to prove that the marriage was indissoluble by any law human or divine. (See pp. 67, 68.) In

October came an intimation that the cause was "advoked" to Rome, and Henry felt that, as far as the Holy See was concerned, his hopes were doomed to disappointment.<sup>1</sup>

#### (4) First Steps towards Schism.

Cardinal Wolsey fell, as he had foreseen, and died in disgrace on the 29th of November, 1530. After his death there entered into the King's service a man of his household who was destined for some years to be the King's evil genius, and to hurry him on the downward course. Thomas Cromwell is said to have been the first to suggest to the King that since the Pope would not grant his desires, he should free himself and his kingdom from the yoke of Rome.

The first steps towards schism were quickly made. In the life of Blessed John Fisher the reader will find described how early in 1531 the clergy were cajoled and intimidated into acknowledging the King as "Supreme Head on earth of the Church in England," though with the important qualification, "as far as the law of Christ allows." (See pp. 70—76.)

Meanwhile Henry had met his other evil counsellor Thomas Cranmer (August, 1530) and was eagerly pursuing his advice to endeavour to get from the Universities of Europe opinions in favour

<sup>1</sup> For further details of the negotiations with the Roman Court see Mr. D. Lewis's introduction to his translation of Sander's *Anglican Schism*.

of the divorce. Agents all over the Continent were using every art of bribery and corruption to gain favourable replies from these learned bodies.

The poor Queen during this period suffered every kind of humiliation, which she bore with extraordinary dignity and firmness. Nothing could make her acknowledge that she was not the King's lawful wife. At last the Pope interfered in her behalf, and on January the 25th, 1532, sent a brief of reproof to the King for his desertion of Catherine. Henry retorted by inducing the Parliament to pass an Act for abolishing the payment of First-fruits to Rome. On May the 15th followed the famous "Submission of the Clergy," by which "they agreed to enact no new ordinances without royal licence, and to submit to a committee of sixteen persons, one half laymen and one half clerics, the question as to what ordinances should be annulled as inconsistent with God's law and those of the realm." "Thus," says Dr. Gairdner, "the freedom of the Church of England came to an end."<sup>1</sup> (See p. 79.)

Blessed Thomas More, who had long been dissatisfied with the King's proceedings, straightway resigned the great seal and retired into private life. (See pp. 185—188.)

On the 25th of January, 1533, the King secretly married Anne Boleyn, knowing her to be with child. An irrevocable step was thus taken, and to a man of Henry's character, to draw back was henceforth all

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, "Henry VIII.," vol. xxvi. p. 85.

but impossible. Anne was crowned as Queen at Westminster to the disgust of the people, on June the 1st, by the obsequious Cranmer, who had succeeded Warham as Archbishop in March, having on May the 23rd pronounced at Dunstable a sentence declaring the King's marriage with Catherine null and void.

"The Pope could not but reply to these insults to public morality, and to the contempt they showed for the authority of the Holy See." Sentence of excommunication was passed on Henry on June the 11th, and on the 23rd of March, 1534, the Pope finally and solemnly pronounced Henry's marriage with Catherine valid.

#### (5) Persecuting Statutes.

Meanwhile, a carefully selected Parliament, which met in January, was occupied in passing Acts which were to sever England from the unity of Christendom. The first confirmed the abolition of annats and gave the appointment of bishops to the King, a second abolished Peter's Pence, and for all dispensations and licences substituted Cranmer for the Pope. Exempt monasteries were henceforth to be subject to the King's visitation instead of to the Pope's. By a third all appeals to Rome were forbidden. A fourth annulled the Heresy Act of 2 Henry IV., and yet another deprived the Italians Campeggio and Ghinucci of their sees of Salisbury and Worcester. It was war to the knife with Rome. (See pp. 79 and 185.)

But the most important of these Acts was that of the Succession, passed in March, 1534. It was this Act which directly brought about the martyrdoms described in these pages, since the Oath it prescribed to be taken by every person of lawful age, either implicitly or explicitly (for the exact form was not then prescribed) repudiated the claim of the See of Peter on the allegiance of every Christian man. (See pp. 83, 196—207, 334—338.)

In November the anti-Papal Legislation was completed by the Act of Supremacy, which declared the King "Supreme Head of the Church of England," and annexed that title to the English Crown. At the same time the Oath which had been already issued under Letters Patent, was first made law, though be it remembered Blessed John Fisher and Blessed Thomas More had been illegally imprisoned now for some months for refusing it. It was also declared High Treason maliciously to deny the King's right to his new title.

This had been passed by the compliant legislature only under great pressure, and they insisted on inserting into the Statute the word "maliciously," though events soon proved how futile was such a precaution. (See pp. 93, 98, 215, 216—218, 220—225, 257—259, 291, 292.)

#### (6) The Fall of the Old Church.

When it is considered what these changes meant, it must be owned that we are surprised to find not so many martyrs but so few. How was it



that the King was enabled to carry out his will with such comparative ease, opposed as that will undoubtedly was to the dearest convictions of the great majority of his people? We cannot pretend to give a complete answer to this question, but we may suggest some considerations which may help in some measure to solve it.

(a.) The first would be that the people were altogether unprepared for the crisis. The persecution fell upon them with dramatic suddenness like a bolt from the blue. There were very few far-sighted men like Blessed Thomas More, who foresaw the dangers that threatened, while the sky seemed yet clear and serene. (See pp. 179, 180.)

The majority were taken by surprise, and could hardly realize the grave issues at stake. This appears specially clear in the case of the Religious Orders. (See pp. 334—338.)

(b.) And our second explanation would be that the crisis seemed only temporary in character.

As we have seen, it was primarily due to Henry's passion for Anne Boleyn, and who could imagine that that would prove more than a passing fancy? The Pope himself temporized and delayed in the hope that Henry's passion for her would soon begin to wane, and thus the difficulty would disappear of itself.

Even Wolsey was slow to believe that Henry seriously intended that such a woman should share his throne and succeed to the place of the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. And people therefore argued that it was better to yield for a moment to

the storm, which though heavy would doubtless be quickly passed, than by opposition to destroy themselves, and in many cases also the trusts committed to them. And so, as too often happens, the good who might have averted the catastrophe had they acted in time, waited until the hour for action was passed, always hoping for better days, and in the meantime too often yielding to the evil of the present. (See pp. 6, 10, 199—201, 211, 257—259, &c.)

(c.) A third reason for the fall of many may be found in the fact that, of late years at any rate, what are generally known as Gallican principles had invaded the Church to a considerable extent. This was in no small degree a legacy of the Great Schism. Christendom had witnessed for a long period the unedifying spectacle of rival Popes each claiming her allegiance as the true Successor of St. Peter, and each anathematizing the other and all who supported him. She had seen councils meet which arrogated to themselves the right to judge and to depose the Roman Pontiff. The practical corruptions to which such a state of things naturally gave rise, were less serious than the speculative doubts and new-fangled ideas to which it directly contributed. Again the worldliness of the Roman Court of the Renaissance, the secular ambitions of Pontiffs like Sixtus IV. and Julius II., the semi-pagan character of the Court of Leo X., the scandals which afflicted the souls of all true lovers of the Church, could not but have their influence in weakening the faith of men in the divine

character of the Papacy. Thus we find that even Blessed Thomas More held confused views as to the divine origin of the Pope's Supremacy, until he was led seriously to inquire into the matter. (See pp. 194—196.) At the same time it must not be forgotten that the Church of England assembled in synod under the presidency of Archbishop Arundel had in the year 1413 condemned Wickliffe's teaching as heretical, which shows that it believed Papal Supremacy to be *de fide*.<sup>1</sup>

(*d.*) But the most important explanation of the phenomenon is undoubtedly to be found in the extraordinary tyranny of the King. The Tudor monarchy had in fact attained to power for which there was no parallel in English history. The astute policy of Henry VII. had broken the political influence of the great nobles, who had already been decimated by the Wars of the Roses. There was no power left to face the Crown, but the Church, and the Church herself was weak. Here too the Crown had gradually usurped enormous power, and the heritage of liberty won for her by the blood of St. Thomas of Canterbury was now almost lost. The natural guardians of that liberty were the Bishops, but for many generations the Bishops had been practically nominated by the Crown. As a natural result they were subservient to a degree now almost incredible. The great Wolsey was rather a statesman than an ecclesiastic, and as a statesman, in spite of his extraordinary powers and real devotion to his country's good, he was guilty

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 353—7.

of the grossest subservience to the King's desires. Henry found none who dared oppose him in his designs, save here and there a Fisher or a More, and no wonder if with repeated success he grew ever more exorbitant in his demands, more insatiable in his ambition. Parliament was mainly composed of royal nominees, and became every year more and more an instrument in the King's hands. And now the King had at his side a man who had been trained in the school of Macchiavelli, and whose avowed aim it was to minister to the royal desires in all things, whether lawful or unlawful. Cromwell was a man without scruples and without pity. It would seem that he did not delight in wanton cruelty, but he was absolutely cold and ruthless in carrying out his designs.

#### (7) Periods of the Persecution.

(a.) Thus after the passing of the Act of Supremacy began the English reign of terror (1535—1540). The year 1535 is filled with martyrdoms, martyrdoms that thrilled the world both at home and abroad with horror. "The very best men in England," says Gairdner, "were martyred in order that Henry might secure the succession of the crown to the offspring of Anne Boleyn." The question of succession was, as we have seen, inextricably woven with that of Papal Supremacy. Hence, Fisher and More were sent to the Tower, apparently for refusing to swear to the succession, but really for upholding the

supremacy of the Apostolic See. (See pp. 85—87, and 205, 206.)

The Carthusians and other martyrs of this year perished for refusing to take an oath, which, while it professed allegiance to the new Queen and her offspring, expressly repudiated in the most offensive terms the spiritual jurisdiction of the Vicar of Christ. (See p. 11.) Other martyrs who yielded for a time, afterwards gained courage to return to the faith for which in later years they gladly died. Such were the Blessed Abbots of Glastonbury, Reading, and Colchester, and perhaps Blessed John Forest, O.S.F. (See pp. 291—293, 310.) The case of Blessed John Haile is somewhat different from that of his fellow-martyrs. (pp. 19—22.) Three years later, the new tenet of Royal Supremacy had been elevated, under Cranmer's influence, into a dogma of the faith, and Blessed John Forest was actually burned as a heretic for certain "abominable heresies, and blasphemies against God," the third of which was "that we ought to believe and do as our fathers have done aforetime fourteen years past." (p. 302.) But this is a solitary instance of such perversity, and in the case of Blessed Thomas Abel and his companions (p. 462) we see a return to the usual system. On this memorable occasion six victims suffered, three Protestants were burned as heretics for denying Transubstantiation, and three Catholics martyred as traitors for repudiating the Royal Supremacy. (July 30, 1540.)

We must, however, retrace our steps to the great year of martyrdom, which witnessed the first blood

shed in England for the Church since the days of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

The next year, 1536, witnessed the suppression of the smaller monasteries, *i.e.*, those whose annual revenues amounted to less than £200 a year. The design to do away with these houses of religion was suggested in great part by their known attachment to the Holy See. It was felt that while they remained, they would be so many strongholds of the old faith, so many thorns in the side of the new authorities. But a still more powerful reason for their dissolution was the cupidity of the King. (See pp. 393, 394.)

Their suppression was prepared for by a Royal Visitation, which was placed under the supervision of Cromwell. It was cleverly carried out and professed to discover that in the monasteries there flourished every kind of hideous scandal and immorality. The visitors, indeed, took care to find what they sought. The truth, however, thanks in great part to the labours of Abbot Gasquet, is now made clear. "It is impossible," says Gairdner, significantly, "to attach much credit to the reports or to think highly of the character of the Visitors." The Act of Suppression was only passed under very strong pressure, and on the King's own statements as to the results of the Visitation. It is now clear that there were few notable abuses, certainly no notable immorality to be found in the English monasteries. The accusations were but the pretext for an act of spoliation of which the real objects were to strike a heavy blow at religion and to fill the royal coffers.

In January, 1536, the unhappy Catherine died,

and in May her insolent rival followed her to the grave, but it was now too late to undo the fatal work which had sprung from Henry's passion for her whom he now sent callously to her doom.

Popular discontent at last broke out in the North of England, but the rising in Lincolnshire and the more famous "Pilgrimage of Grace" in Yorkshire (October, 1536), were put down with a ruthlessness that was only matched by the perfidy with which the King treated the leaders of the movement. (See pp. 369—371, and 389.) The savage executions of the insurgents terrified the country, and at the end of 1537 Henry found himself freed from danger at home, and able to proceed in the work of destruction. In 1538 many of the great monasteries were induced to surrender, and the cruel execution of some of their heads (*e.g.*, the Abbot of Woburn) for rejecting Royal Supremacy, struck terror into all.

(*b.*) This was a period of iconoclasm not less than of bloodshed. Under the influence of Cromwell, who had been appointed the King's Vicegerent in spiritual things, and of Cranmer, both of whom were heretics at heart, a determined attack was made on those objects and places of devotion which were most dear to a Catholic people. The concurrence of the King in these proceedings was secured by the gratification of his cupidity. The shrines of England's saints had been enriched by the generous offerings of centuries. Foreign visitors were filled with amazement at the riches of such shrines as Walsingham, or those of St. Thomas at Canterbury and St. Cuthbert at Durham. But not

only were the treasures of these holy places pillaged, but what was far more grievous to Catholic piety, the sacred relics themselves were outraged and dispersed. Preachers were commissioned to denounce the "idolatry" which had been offered at these holy shrines, and to ridicule the devotion which the people offered to the sacred images of the saints. A specimen of the sacrilegious treatment which sacred things and places had now to suffer, will be found in this work. (pp. 373—377.)

Relics like the "Blood of Hailes," famous images like the "Rood of Boxley" and Our Lady of Walsingham, Worcester and Willesden were carried off to London, where they were exposed to the ridicule of the heretics, and burned with ostentation at Smithfield. One of these images had indeed a living companion in the flames, for when Blessed John Forest was burned (May 22, 1538), there was consumed with him a celebrated image of the Welsh Saint Derfel. (pp. 304—306, 318—320.) More grievous yet was the destruction of the bodies of England's most glorious saints. Even the relics of the Apostle of England at Canterbury were not spared. If St. Edward remained untouched at Westminster, it was because of his royal dignity, not for his saintly fame.

The climax was reached in the destruction of one of the principal shrines of Europe, that of St. Thomas Becket. All Christendom was horrified to hear of the pillage of this renowned shrine (September, 1538) and of the burning of the martyr's sacred body. The Pope at once re-issued the Bull



of Excommunication of 1535, with additions setting forth the King's further enormities. The impetus thus given to the spread of heresy was great indeed, and the movement proved far easier to inaugurate than to check. The foreign Reformers openly boasted that the King was now all their own, and that the Gospel light would soon burn brightly through the land. But Henry was not disposed to yield up his prerogative of Supreme Head to the dictation of foreign Protestants. Nor did he wish to go further on the path of heresy. He saw well enough how obnoxious to the whole country was the course into which he had been impelled by his resentment against the Holy See, inflamed as that had been by cunning and unscrupulous advisers. Cromwell had now done his work and could be sacrificed to his foes. The Act of the Six Articles (1539) marked a reaction and was the precursor of the fall of the all-powerful Minister. Before his destruction, however, he had completed his work of the dissolution of the religious houses of England. By the end of 1539 not a single monastery was left in the country.

The Act of the Six Articles was meant to be "an answer to the taunts that the English were heretics, and that the Pope's excommunication was well deserved." By this enactment it was declared heresy to deny the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and felony to maintain that Communion in both kinds was necessary, or that priests or religious might marry, or to deny the efficacy of private Masses and of the Sacrament of Penance.

The Act was a violent remedy for a state of religious anarchy for which the King himself was chiefly to blame. It effected some good in checking the flood which he had himself let loose, but it was powerless to do all that was wished.

(c.) Henry had now reached the high-water mark of his tyranny. As infallible Pope and despotic sovereign, he disposed alike of the bodies and souls of his unhappy subjects. Those who were unwilling either to join in his revolt against the Holy See, or, on the other hand, to stay their course at the precise point which he had fixed, were mercilessly slaughtered. The Parliament had become his unreasoning and compliant instrument, the clergy had been terrified into abject submission. The Bishops looked to him for their faculties, which were granted or withdrawn at discretion. No preacher dared open his mouth without the royal licence.

There was no one left to oppose openly the King's will, and he was left triumphant in the desert he had formed around him. Nay, there was yet one Englishman who dared to uphold the ancient faith, still clung to in secret by the enormous majority of the people. He however was out of Henry's power. Reginald Cardinal Pole, who was to have the sad honour of closing the line of England's Catholic Primates, dared openly to rebuke the King's wickedness, and to expose in the face of Christendom the bloody catalogue of his victims.<sup>1</sup> The vengeance, however, which failed to reach him fell most heavily

<sup>1</sup> Two opinions may be formed as to Pole's prudence, but this we have discussed elsewhere (pp. 519, 520).

on his innocent family, who were in Henry's power. The fury with which his relatives and friends were pursued shows how well the Court knew that Pole spoke in the name of a still Catholic England.

The method by which his aged mother, the Blessed Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and his brothers and other relatives were destroyed, forms an extraordinary instance of the savage contempt for all justice which characterized this period. (See p. 521.)

Simultaneously with the Act of the Six Articles was passed an infamous Statute of Attainder, an instrument designed by the ingenuity of Cromwell to destroy these innocent victims and others like them, against whom no evidence of treason or wrong-doing could be brought. This instrument, by a most righteous retribution, became in the next year the means of the destruction of its miserable author. (July 28, 1540.)

Thus the acme of tyranny was reached. Men, women, and even children were now condemned without a hearing and without a trial, and for the remaining years of his life Henry seemed rather to resemble an Eastern despot than an English King.

"Henry," observed a writer in the *Spectator*, not long ago, "was as unmoral as Napoleon, as ruthless as a Spanish Inquisitor, as remorseless as a Corsican brigand."

The account of his last days is indeed a terrible one; the handsome, pious, and brilliant monarch, who had gladdened England by his accession, gradually sank into the grave a bloated mass of

corruption, the object of mingled hatred and fear : and all England rejoiced when, on January 28, 1547, Henry's soul went at last to meet its Judge.

Hardly indeed had the breath left his body when by a just retribution his last will was set aside ; the prayers and Masses which he had directed to be said in perpetuity for his soul were left unsaid, his ordinances as to religion were repealed, the heresies which he detested were openly taught and enforced, and all this by the authority of the Royal Supremacy and at the instigation of the men who during his life had been his subservient instruments in infamy from the day that he severed himself and his people from the unity of Christendom and from the communion of the Apostolic See.

### Section III. *The Writers of the present work.*

I must now briefly recount the genesis and history of the present work, which has not been unadventurous. As already stated, it was projected by the Fathers of the London Oratory at the time of the Beatification in 1886. The moving spirit in the work was the late Father Edward Stephen Keogh, who was distinguished both as a theologian and a historian. Father Keogh, in spite of failing health, took up the work with the greatest vigour, and in a few months had completed a large number of the lives. So great was his energy that his last illness is thought to have been hastened through his devotion to the task of compiling these lives. He died at the Oratory, on October 29, 1887, aged 53.

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The work was then continued by the late Father Richard Stanton, the learned compiler of the *Menology of England and Wales*, and Father Henry Sebastian Bowden wrote for it the life of Blessed Edmund Campion. But old age and failing health prevented Father Stanton from concluding what had been begun, although he wrote several of the lives.

He in turn passed on the work to Father John Morris, S.J., who took it up with his wonted energy, and wrote the lives of Forest and Fortescue. But the long-delayed cause of the Benedictine Abbots and their companions prevented him also from completing the task, for, as he wrote to the present editor in 1892, he was reluctant to publish the work without including the lives of the Benedictines. As is well known, Father Morris was suddenly taken from us in 1893, and the manuscripts then in his possession passed to Father John Pollen, S.J., who inherited his position as Postulator in England of the cause of our martyrs. Father Pollen however was so much taken up with other work, that in October, 1899, he asked the present writer to undertake the task of completing the work which had been so long delayed. Father Bridgett, C.S.S.R., had also been approached on the subject, but age and growing infirmity made him unwilling to undertake so laborious a task, though he kindly assisted in the work by some valuable suggestions. The present editor was well aware of his own insufficiency to complete a work begun and continued under such auspices, but neither did he feel that he

could refuse the opportunity thus afforded him of doing what lay in his power to further the cause of our Blessed Martyrs.

When he received the Manuscripts he found that several lives yet remained to be written, and these he has supplied to the best of his ability. A more formidable task however lay before him. When the lives were handed over to Father Morris he was expressly requested by the Oratorian editors not to publish them until they had been thoroughly revised and brought up to date from the point of view of modern research. This however yet remained to be undertaken. It is obvious that much has been discovered, much has been published since these lives were first projected in 1886, for instance, not less than thirteen volumes of State Papers, which are of primary authority for the period under discussion. Moreover, careful and complete as was the work of Father Keogh and Father Stanton, it had been left unrevised, and needed both corrections and additions. The present editor has therefore had to go through the whole of the lives, with but few exceptions, and to do his best to make them accurate and complete. He has re-written practically the whole of the notes, verified the references, and revised the text. The exceptions to this rule consist in the lives of Blessed Thomas Percy (in the second volume) which, already published by the Catholic Truth Society, has been revised by its original author, the Rev. George Phillips, of Ushaw College, and in those of Blessed John Forest and Blessed Thomas Abel and his

companions, which have been practically re-written by Father Pollen. It is right to remark that the life of Blessed Adrian Fortescue, though written for this work, has already appeared in print, but with this exception and that of Percy, the lives are entirely new.

The editor has had to re-write the life of Blessed Margaret Pole by Father Keogh, and to make additions and corrections more than usually numerous to that of Blessed John Fisher by Father Stanton.

He has been very greatly aided in his task by Father John Pollen, who in justice should be named joint editor of the work. Father Pollen has not only read and revised the proofs, but has most generously given the editor throughout the work the benefit of his unrivalled knowledge of the martyrs' history, and, as far as the first volume at any rate is concerned, Father Pollen must be held jointly responsible with the editor for the statements and the opinions propounded.

As the first volume is to be published before the second, which is however in the press, it may be well to add that a full index to the whole work will be found at the end of the second volume, which contains the lives of the martyrs who suffered under Elizabeth. For this the editor has to thank two good friends who are devoted to the cause of the martyrs, Miss Gunning and Miss Jewitt, of Erdington. He has also to thank Father Patrick Ryan, S.J., for his valuable services in helping to correct the proof-sheets.

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The late Mr. Aubrey de Vere kindly gave the editor permission to print his beautiful sonnet on the martyrs at the head of this volume. It is not to be found in his published works.

It is hoped that these volumes may be followed in due time by the lives of the martyrs who have been declared Venerable.

Finally, the editor submits himself and his writings to the judgment of the Church, and prays that these Lives may serve in some degree to make the Blessed Martyrs of our country better known and loved among us.

DOM BEDE CAMM, O.S.B.

*Erdington Abbey,  
Birmingham.  
April 17, 1904.*



Section IV. *Authorities.*(a) *Original Sources.*

Besides the references given in the notes throughout the volume, a short description has been added at the end of each biography of the particular authorities which relate to that life. Here a few words must also be said on the sources of a more general nature. First we may note that we have practically no sources in which we may expect to find reports of the martyrdoms by Catholic writers, or by friends. During the later phases of the persecution things were different. Catholic colleges and institutes had then been formed on the Continent and their correspondents in England sent them over accounts describing the sufferings of the martyrs in sympathetic terms. King Henry's tyranny crushed all correspondence. We can see from the letters of Cardinal Pole, and from the Vatican Archives, that as a rule the only news to be had was derived from casual letter-writers and travellers. The Vatican was naturally well informed on the subject of the Divorce, and these papers have now been excellently edited by Dr. Ehses. (See below, p. 121.) Transcripts of such martyr-papers, as are to be found in the Vatican, have been made by the late Father Stevenson and Mr. W. Bliss, and these may now be consulted at the Record Office (*Roman Transcripts*). A few of them are described in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*

The despatches of the Imperial and French Ambassadors to their respective Sovereigns form perhaps the most complete series of contemporary Catholic comment on the progress of events that we possess. But the Ambassadors did not reside in England throughout the whole period, religious affairs were only of secondary importance to them, and the French were often in league with Henry and the Protestants. The Spanish documents are mostly at Simancas and Vienna, and have been partly edited in the *Spanish Calendars*, and in *Letters and Papers*. An *Inventaire analytique* of the French diplomatic papers has been commenced by J. Kaulek, *Correspondance*

de MM. de Castillon et de Marillac (Paris), 1895. The *Calendars of Venetian Papers*, though their information on religious topics is meagre, should also be consulted.

On the other hand, hostile sources are very full. The numerous documents at the Record Office may be regarded as Cromwell's correspondence, or as papers of the prosecution. They were either left by him in the State archives of that day, or were seized at the time of his fall. It is evident that the perusal of them is calculated to produce upon readers the effect which the respective writers intended, that is, of hatred of the old order of things. On the other hand, that hatred is carried to such extremes, and is so outspoken, that we find little difficulty in recognizing its presence, and making allowances for its influence. So that in the end this evidence, though unfriendly and often malicious, is under the circumstances the best we have.

The papers in question are preserved partly at the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, partly in the British Museum, and both series have been calendared by Messrs. J. S. Brewer, James Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie. Nineteen volumes have now appeared, some of them in several parts. The full title is *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the reign of Henry VIII., preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and elsewhere in England*. An abstract is given of each document, which is always scholarly and generally full; but it is not intended to be sufficient to absolve the student from consulting the originals. The series entitled *State Papers, Henry VIII.* (vols. i. to xi.), 1830 to 1852, on the other hand, consists of documents printed at full length, but of course only contains a selection of them.

Other important collections of documents, which illustrate our subject, may be mentioned, *Third Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, which contains a calendar of the collection called, *Baga de Secretis*. These are law papers, and include the indictments of several of the martyrs.

*Acts of Privy Council, First Series* (to 1542) by Sir Harris Nicolas; *New Series* (to 1592) by J. R. Dasent.

R. B. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, 2 vols. Oxford, 1902. These include all the letters known to have been written by Cromwell.

Nicholas Pocock, *Records of the Reformation*, 2 vols. Oxford, 1870.

Thomas Wright, *Letters Relative to the Suppression of the Monasteries*. Camden Society, 1843.

(b) *Chronicles and Early Histories.*

*Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*. Ed. by J.G. Nichols. Camden Society, 1852.

*Chronicle of King Henry VIII.* (by Garzias?). Translated from the Spanish by Martin Hume. London, 1889.

E. Hall, *Chronicle*. London, 1548. Reprinted 1809.

R. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, vol. ii. and iii. London, 1587.

J. Stow, *Annales, or Chronicle*. London, 1582; but his briefer *Annals* had appeared in 1565.

C. Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, 2 vols. Camden Society, 1875.

The Chroniclers are hostile, except the two first. Hall is especially bitter. But their witness is often most important, as determining the true cause for which a martyr suffered, or deciding the date of martyrdom.

Of early Catholic histories far the most important is

Nicholas Sander (or Sanders), *Historia Schismatis Anglicani*. Cologne, 1585.

Edward Sander was a fellow of New College, Oxford. He left England in 1561 for his faith, and after a distinguished career at the Council of Trent and elsewhere, became Regius Professor of Theology at Louvain, where he wrote his great work, *De visibili Monarchia Ecclesiæ*, 1571. He afterwards went to Rome, where he wrote the *De Schismate*. The only known copy of the MS. as he left it, is in the English College there. Finally he went to Spain and Ireland, with the Papal succours sent to the Geraldines, and there died about the year 1581.

Edward Rishton, a seminary priest, undertook to edit Sander's manuscript, and it was printed at Cologne in 1585, the editor having died before it appeared. But the second edition, published at Rome in 1586 by Bartolomeo Bonfadini, is the most famous of all the editions. The editor was Father Robert Persons, S.J., who introduced many additions. Some

were of very great importance, but some were misplaced or erroneous. The book in this form passed through very many editions abroad. An example of the mistakes made in it, will be found below, p. 324.

Sander's reliability as a historian was warmly controverted by Burnet, and defended by Le Grand and others, but so far as the history of the Martyrs is concerned, this controversy is not of great importance. Mr. David Lewis has translated and ably edited Rishton's Edition of the *De Schismate. The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*. London, 1877. But a scholarly edition of the work in all its various forms (taking account for instance of the additions made by Ribadeneira and Pollini) is much to be desired.

(c) *Modern Histories.*

Dodd (*vere* Hugh Tootel) though very inaccurate is still of much use to the student. His *Church History of England* was published 1737-39-42. The edition by Canon Tierney, though exceedingly learned and valuable, was somewhat marred by party-feeling and was unfortunately never completed. The biographical notices which form the most valuable portion of Dodd, were not even begun by his editor.

J. Gillow, in his *Bibliographical Dictionary of English Catholics* (London, 1885-1903), has to a great extent supplied this want. His valuable work may be regarded as a revised edition of the biographical portion of Dodd, brought down to date, carefully written and enriched by precious bibliographical notices which it is impossible to find elsewhere. Unhappily, through no fault of the author, the lives from "Mey" to the end of the alphabet had to be compressed into one volume, and thus from this point the Dictionary leaves much to be desired.

Lingard of course has not yet been superseded, in spite of the lapse of time since he first published his great work (1819-1830). As the *Dictionary of National Biography* observes, "it remains the authority for the Reformation from the side of the enlightened Roman Catholic priesthood." At the same time in common with other general histories of its period, it

needs correction and enlargement from the point of view of modern research.

Among Protestant historians I may mention

J. S. Brewer, *The Reign of Henry VIII.*, 2 vols. London, 1884.

R. W. Dixon, *History of the Church of England*, vols i. and ii. London, 1878, 1881. These earlier volumes are remarkably sympathetic in tone.

P. Friedmann, *Anne Boleyn*, 2 vols. 1884.

James Gairdner. The two works already quoted in this Introduction; also his valuable Prefaces to the volumes of *Letters and Papers* calendared by him.

A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII.* London, 1902. More remarkable for the artistic reproduction of contemporary portraits which it contains, than for the history, which is an attempt to whitewash the King.

A. Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, vol. ii. London, 1854.

J. Reeve, *History of English Law*, with notes by W. F. Finlason. The persecuting statutes are well described, vol. iii. pp. 201, 238, 246, 568, 681.

To these must be added biographical collections such as those of Anthony à Wood for the alumni of Oxford, who form a large percentage among the Martyrs, Charles Henry Cooper for the Cambridge men, and last but not least the great *Dictionary of National Biography* which is an invaluable boon to one engaged on a work like the present.

DECREE

of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, for the Diocese of Westminster, confirming the honour given to the Blessed Martyrs JOHN CARDINAL FISHER, THOMAS MORE, and others, put to death in England for the Faith, from the year 1535 to 1583.

ENGLAND, once called the Island of Saints and Dowry of the Virgin Mother of God, was renowned, even from the first ages of the Church, for the sufferings of its many Martyrs. So too in the sixteenth century, when torn by dire schism from the obedience and communion of the Roman See, those were found who "did not hesitate to yield their lives and shed their blood for the dignity of this See and the truth of the orthodox faith."<sup>1</sup>

This noble band lacks neither fulness of numbers nor grade of honour. It is adorned with the grandeur of the Roman purple, it is dignified by venerable Bishops, it comprises magnanimous priests, both secular and regular; the invincible firmness of the weaker sex is also there. Eminent among them is JOHN FISHER, Bishop of Rochester, and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, of whom Paul III. speaks in his Letters as "conspicuous for sanctity, celebrated for learning, venerable by age, an honour and an ornament to the kingdom and to the clergy of the whole world." From him the layman Thomas More, Chancellor of England, must not be separated; whom the same Pope deservedly praises as "excelling in sacred learning and bold in his assertion of the truth."

Accordingly, the most weighty writers on ecclesiastical history are unanimously of opinion that they all shed their blood for the defence, restoration, and preservation of the Catholic faith. Gregory XIII. even granted in their honour several ecclesiastical privileges appertaining to public and ecclesiastical worship, and chiefly that of using their relics in the consecration of altars when relics of ancient holy Martyrs could not be had. Moreover, after he had caused

<sup>1</sup> Gregory XIII. Constitution *Quoniam divina bonitati*, May 1, 1579.

the sufferings of the Christian Martyrs to be painted in fresco by Nicholas Circiniani, in the Church of St. Stephen on the Cœlian Hill, he permitted also the Martyrs of the Church in England, both of ancient and of more recent times, to be represented in like manner by the same artist in the English Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Rome, including those who from the year 1535 to 1583 had died under King Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth, for the Catholic faith, and for the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. The representations of these martyrdoms, painted in the said church, remained, with the knowledge and approbation of the Roman Pontiffs who succeeded Gregory XIII. for two centuries, until they were destroyed by wicked men about the end of the last century.

But copies of them still remained; for in the year 1584, with the privilege of the said Gregory XIII., they had been engraved at Rome on copper-plate, with the title: *Sufferings of the Holy Martyrs, who for Christ's sake and for professing the truth of the Catholic faith, have suffered death in England both in ancient and more recent times.* From this record, either by inscriptions placed beneath them or by other sure indications, many of the Martyrs are known by name, that is to say, fifty-four. They are :

Those who suffered death under King Henry VIII. :

JOHN FISHER, Bishop of Rochester, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church.

THOMAS MORE, Chancellor of England.

MARGARET POLE, Countess of Salisbury, mother of Cardinal Pole.

RICHARD REYNOLDS, of the Order of St. Bridget

JOHN HAILE, priest.

Eighteen Carthusians, namely :

JOHN HOUGHTON.

AUGUSTINE WEBSTER.

ROBERT LAWRENCE.

WILLIAM EXMEW.

HUMPHREY MIDDLEMORE.

JOHN DAVY.

ROBERT SALT.

WALTER PIERSON.

THOMAS GREEN.

THOMAS SCRIVEN.

SEBASTIAN NEWDIGATE.	THOMAS REDYNG.
JOHN ROCHESTER.	THOMAS JOHNSON.
JAMES WALWORTH.	RICHARD BERE,
WILLIAM GREENWOOD.	and WILLIAM HORNE.

JOHN FOREST, priest of the Order of St. Francis  
JOHN STONE, of the Order of St. Augustine.

Four secular priests :

THOMAS ABEL.  
EDWARD POWELL.  
RICHARD FETHERSTON.  
JOHN LARKE,  
and GERMAN GARDINER (a layman).

Those who suffered under Elizabeth :

Priests :

CUTHBERT MAYNE.	LUKE KIRBY.
JOHN NELSON.	LAURENCE RICHARDSON.
EVERARD HANSE.	WILLIAM LACY.
RALPH SHERWIN.	RICHARD KIRKMAN.
JOHN PAYNE.	JAMES HUDSON, or TOMPSON.
THOMAS FORD.	WILLIAM HART.
JOHN SHERT.	RICHARD THIRKELD.
ROBERT JOHNSON.	THOMAS WOODHOUSE.
WILLIAM FYLBY.	[THOMAS] PLUMTREE.

Also three priests of the Society of Jesus :

EDMUND CAMPION.	ALEXANDER BRIANT.
THOMAS COTTAM.	

Lastly these laymen :

JOHN STOREY, Doctor of Laws.	JOHN FELTON.
THOMAS SHERWOOD.	

Until lately, the Cause of these Martyrs had never been officially treated. Some time ago, in the year 1860, Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman, of illustrious memory, Archbishop of Westminster, and the other Bishops of England, petitioned the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX. of sacred memory, to institute



for the whole of England a festival in honour of all holy Martyrs, that is to say, even of those "who though not yet declared to be such, have in later times, for their defence of the Catholic religion, and especially for asserting the authority of the Apostolic See, fallen by the hands of wicked men, and resisted unto blood." But as, according to the prevailing practice of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, a festival can be instituted in regard to those servants of God only to whom ecclesiastical honour (*cultus*) has been already given and duly sanctioned by the Apostolic See, the said petition was not granted. Wherefore in these last years a new petition was presented to our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., by His Eminence Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, the present Archbishop of Westminster, and the other Bishops of England, together with the Ordinary Process which had been there compiled, and other authentic documents, in which were contained the proofs of Martyrdom as to those who suffered from the year 1535 to 1583, and also the aforesaid concessions of the Roman Pontiffs in regard to those above mentioned.

Our Holy Father was pleased to commit the examination of the whole matter to a special Congregation, consisting of several Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and of officials of the Congregation of Sacred Rites,—the examination to be preceded by a Disquisition, to be drawn up by the Right Reverend Augustine Caprara, Promoter of the Holy Faith. In this special Congregation, assembled at the Vatican on the 4th day of December of the present year, the undersigned Cardinal Dominic Bartolini, Prefect of the said Sacred Congregation, who had charge of the Cause, proposed the following question :

*"Whether,—by reason of the special concessions of the Roman Pontiffs, in regard to the earlier Martyrs of England who from the year 1535 to 1583 suffered death for the Catholic faith and for the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff over the Church, and whose Martyrdoms were formerly painted, by authority of the Sovereign Pontiff Gregory XIII. in the English Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Rome, and in the year 1584 were engraved at Rome on copper-plate with the privilege of the same Pontiff,—there is evidence*

*of the concession of public ecclesiastical honour, or of this being a case excepted from the decrees of Pope Urban VIII. of sacred memory, in the matter and to the effect under consideration?"*

The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers, and the Official Prelates, after hearing the written and oral report of the aforesaid Promoter of the Holy Faith, and after the matter in regard to the fifty-four Martyrs above named had been fully discussed, were of opinion that the answer to be given was:

*" Affirmatively, or That it is proved to be a case excepted."*

The undersigned Secretary having made a faithful report of all that precedes to our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., His Holiness vouchsafed to approve the decision of the Sacred Special Congregation, on the 9th day of December, 1886.

The present decree was issued on this 29th day of December, sacred to the Martyr Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury, whose faith and constancy these blessed Martyrs so strenuously imitated.

D. CARDINAL BARTOLINI,

*Prefect of the Congregation of Sacred Rites.*

LAURENCE SALVATI,

*Secretary.*

L. † S.

# DECREE

of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, for the Diocese of Westminster, confirming the honour paid to the Venerable Servants of God HUGH FARINGDON, RICHARD WHITING, JOHN BECHE, ROGER JAMES, JOHN THORN, WILLIAM EYNON, JOHN RUGG, and ADRIAN FORTESCUE, and also to the Servant of God THOMAS PERCY, who were put to death in England for the Faith.

For the ancient faith of the English, and for the Catholic Religion, the twenty-ninth day of December of the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six dawned with happy

auguries. On that day, by a decree of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, our most holy Lord Pope Leo XIII., confirmed the *cultus* of the ancient Martyrs of England, who from the year 1535 to 1583, fell victims for the Catholic Faith and for the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, of those especially whose martyrdoms were once painted in the Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Rome, and were, with the privilege of the same Pontiff, engraved on copper-plate with legends annexed in the year 1584.

But whereas in the said decree only fifty-four *Beati* were mentioned by name, the Archbishop of Westminster and the other Bishops of Britain, giving expression to their own desires and to those of their clergy and of their Catholic flock, earnestly begged of our most holy Lord the Pope that he would vouchsafe to add to the *Beati* already mentioned those who had been their companions in the last struggle for the sake of the one Faith and the same cause, and that he would by a new decree confer upon these the same title of honour. They were the Venerable Servants of God: HUGH FARINGDON, RICHARD WHITING and JOHN BECHE, Abbots of the Order of Saint Benedict; ROGER JAMES, JOHN THORN, WILLIAM EYNON and JOHN RUGG, Monks of the same Order; as also the Servant of God, THOMAS PERCY, Earl of Northumberland, who bravely made choice of martyrdom rather than honour and life which were offered to him if he would but desert the Faith.

The Bishops declared that it was proved by certain, indisputable, and well-known evidence adduced that all these latter martyrs had learnt in the true Church of Christ—"that the things that were Cæsar's should be rendered to Cæsar, and the things that were God's to God;" and that strengthened by heavenly grace and the Apostolic example, they had rendered their obedience to God and not to men even to the shedding of their blood, and thus the petitioners begged that these sufferers might be reckoned in the same category as those of the English Martyrs, whose *cultus* had by the above-mentioned decree been recognized and ratified by the Apostolic See. The prelates concluded these humble prayers with a special petition, asking that to the aforesaid Venerable Servants of God of the Order of St. Benedict and to that

illustrious man and Servant of God, Thomas Percy, might be added the Venerable Adrian Fortescue, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, who on account of his unswerving profession of the Catholic faith, had been beheaded on the 8th of July, 1539, and is held in special honour with public and long-standing *cultus*, by the same Religious Order of Knights and especially in the island of Malta.

Our most holy Lord graciously assigned this inquiry and the discussion of this Cause, together with the Ordinary Process set on foot in England and the other authentic documents relating to the subject, to the special Congregation, the powers of which were recently confirmed and renewed. It comprised certain Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church as well as Official Prelates of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, and the examination was to be preceded by a disquisition to be drawn up by the Right Reverend Augustine Caprara, Promoter of the Holy Faith.

This commission assembled at the Vatican in a special Congregation on the 7th of December of last year, when the Most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinal Angelo Bianchi, Bishop of Palestrina, the *Relator* of the Cause, proposed the following *dubium* :

*"Whether,—on account of the special indulgences of the Roman Pontiffs and those of Pope Leo XIII. himself, with reference to the earlier English Martyrs, who between the years 1535 and 1583, incurred death for the Catholic Faith and for the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff over the Church,—there is proof of a case excepted from the decrees of Pope Urban VIII. in the matter and to the effect under consideration?"*

The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers, and the Official Prelates,—after hearing the written and oral report of the aforesaid Promoter of the Holy Faith, and after the matter in regard to the nine Martyrs above-named had been fully discussed and considered,—were of opinion that the answer to be given was :

*"Affirmatively, or That it is proved to be a case excepted."*

I, the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Sacred Rites having made a faithful report of all that

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precedes to our most holy lord Pope Leo XIII., His Holiness vouchsafed to approve the decision of the Sacred special Congregation on the 13th day of May, 1895.

CAJETANO CARDINAL ALOISI-MASELLA,  
*Prefect of the Congregation of Sacred Rites.*

ALOISIUS TRIPEPI,  
*Secretary.*

L. † S.

## I.

### THE BLESSED JOHN HOUGHTON, THE BLESSED ROBERT LAWRENCE, AND THE BLESSED AUGUSTINE WEBSTER, *CARTHUSIANS.*

*, Tyburn, 4 May, 1535.*

THE future Proto-Martyr of the persecution in England, John Houghton, was born in 1487, of respectable parents in the county of Essex.

At a fitting age he was sent to the University of Cambridge, of which the Blessed John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was then Chancellor, and in due course graduated in Civil and Canon Law.

His piety matured with his years and intelligence, and when, on the completion of his studies, he found that his parents were planning for his future by endeavouring to secure for him a suitable marriage, he fled from his home, and took refuge with a devout priest, to whom he confided his desire to serve God in the sacerdotal state. In this concealment he remained until his ordination. Then he returned to his home and was easily reconciled to his parents.

For four years he continued to lead the life of a holy secular priest. No details have been preserved

of this period of his life, but it is clear that God was leading him on step by step in the ways of sanctity; for now he determined to leave all things, even his father's house and the joys of natural affection and the innocent use of his own liberty, and serve God in the most perfect life of prayer, penance, and detachment which he could find. And so passing by even the many religious houses of various Orders then happily flourishing around him on all sides in high repute of virtue and fervour, he betook himself to the Carthusians of the Charterhouse,<sup>1</sup> near West Smithfield, a little way out of London, as it was then, and after a long trial, as we are told, was granted the habit. He was then twenty-eight years of age, and was to spend twenty years in this holy state before his glorious consummation. Such is the perfection of St. Bruno's rule that the Church allows religious of any of the mendicant Orders to pass into it, as a state of greater austerity and sanctity, whilst no Carthusian can leave his Order for any other. Peter the Venerable, describing their life a generation after St. Bruno, says, "Their dress is meaner and poorer than that of other monks; so short and scanty and so rough that the very sight affrights one. They wear coarse hair-shirts next their skin, fast almost perpetually, eat only bran bread, never touch flesh, either sick or well. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays they take nothing but bread and water, and have only one meal a day, except in the octaves of Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, Epiphany, and

<sup>1</sup> This is a corrupted form of the word *Chartreuse*.

some other festivals. Their constant occupation is prayer, reading, and manual labour, . . . they say the lesser Hours of the Divine Office in their cells at the time when the bell rings, but meet together at Vespers and Matins with wonderful recollection." Such as their founder left them eight hundred years ago, such they are to our day, never having known relaxation or needed reform.

Amongst those who led this saintly life, Blessed John Houghton was pre-eminent. Penitential as the rule was for all, he contrived to be more austere than its requirements:—he shone, moreover, "in much humility and patience and a perfect mortification of self: he was a most diligent observer of his cell and of silence, ever keeping out of sight and hiding the grace that was granted him, ever desiring to be unknown and thought unworthy of esteem." His brethren appreciated his sanctity, and he was chosen first to the office of Sacrist, which he filled for five years, and then was Procurator of the house for three more, after which he was elected Prior of the Chartreuse of Beauvale,<sup>1</sup> in Nottinghamshire, in the year 1531.

He had governed that house, however, but a few months when John Batmanson, his late Prior at London, died, and he was by a unanimous vote elected to succeed him. Thus recalled to his old home he continued in it till his holy death; but shortly after his election by the nomination of the

<sup>1</sup> In spite of the glorious difficulty of the Carthusian life there were no less than nine houses of the Order at the dissolution of monasteries in the thinly populated England of that day.



Prior of the Grande Chartreuse he became also Visitor of the English Province of the Order.<sup>1</sup>

In the offices of trust and authority to which he was now raised, the virtue of the holy Prior shone more brightly than ever. His patience was not less than heroic. Once when a fallen religious attacked him not only with the grossest insults, but with blows and violence, far from resisting, he threw himself at his feet, and when his brethren hastened to his rescue, earnestly took up the defence of his assailant. His piety was manifested by an abundant gift of holy tears which would sometimes force him to rise from his place in the refectory and hide himself in his cell, but which especially visited him during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He was a vigilant and zealous Superior, continually guarding against the least defects in the sacred psalmody, inquiring into the use of each one's time, assisting the tempted, stimulating the lukewarm, and ever a perfect pattern to all his sons, *factus forma gregis*. His favourite virtue would seem, however, to have been humility. He was much disturbed if any one gave him any title of honour. "It is not lawful," he would say, "for a poor Carthusian monk to broaden the fringes of his garment or be called by men Rabbi." Whenever his brethren made him the obeisance according to custom, though he would not dispense himself from receiving it or them from giving it, he made it the occasion of deep inward

<sup>1</sup> He is described by Chauncy as short in stature, graceful in appearance, venerable in countenance, modest in demeanour, winning in speech.

self-abasement. When alone with a religious in his cell he would behave as if simply one of the brethren, saying he had left his Prior's rank in his own cell; but on other occasions he kept up the honour of his office, though ever with humble modesty. And indeed he seldom had to contend for it, for the brethren vied one with another in reverence and devotion towards him.

To such a life might be applied what St. Ambrose says of holy virginity—that it deserves our praises, not because it is found in the martyrs, but because it makes martyrs. *Non ideo laudabilis virginitas quia in martyribus reperitur, sed quia ipsa martyres facit.* It was the divine training by which God was preparing the Blessed John for martyrdom.

Martyrdom in Christian Catholic England! The idea would have seemed a strange one in the early years of the century which was then but three decades old. But strange things were happening in England now. Perhaps in the life of solitude and prayer of the Charterhouse they were unknown, or unheeded by the faithful sons of St. Bruno, near though they were to the busy life of London. But if so their happy ignorance was not to last. In July of 1533, proclamation was everywhere made of the new law requiring all persons who were sixteen years of age, when called upon, to swear that they would maintain the Act of Succession, which declared that none were heirs to the crown but the children of the King's "lawful wife, Queen Anne." The Carthusians do not seem to have been molested about this law until the next year; but various

revelations and portents are spoken of as having prepared their minds for coming trouble. It came upon them at last. The royal Commissaries appeared at the Charterhouse and required the Prior and his monks to swear to the Succession as declared by the Act. The Prior answered that neither he nor his had any vocation to interfere in the King's business; and that it did not concern them what wife he put away or whom he married, as long as they were not asked anything on the subject. Pressed further by the Commissaries, he admitted that he could not understand how the first marriage solemnized by the Church and so long subsisting could be annulled. On this he, together with Dom Humphrey Middlemore, the Procurator, was carried off to the Tower.

They remained prisoners a month, and then yielding to the judgment of certain good and learned men, who told them that this was no sufficient cause for the sacrifice of their lives, agreed to take the declaration with the saving clause, "as far as it was lawful."<sup>1</sup>

Their brethren received them with joy, and, though not without some trouble of conscience, acquiesced in their advice and took the oath with the same reservation. This was on the 29th of May, 1534.<sup>2</sup> For the moment the danger was over,

<sup>1</sup> *Persuasum est eis per quosdam probos et doctos viros illam non esse licitam causam mortis.* It is thought that their own Bishop, Stokesley, is meant. Both Sir Thomas More and Cardinal Fisher declared that they would have found no difficulty in swearing to the part of the Act which dealt with the Succession.

<sup>2</sup> Not on the 24th, as Chauncy says. Morris, *Troubles*, vol. i. p. 13.

but they knew now that the conflict was only delayed. The Prior told them indeed that the night before leaving the Tower, he had been warned in a dream that within a year he should return to the same prison and there finish his course.

Early next year the Royal Supremacy was made the law of England by Parliament, and its denial was declared high treason. The Prior called his monks together, to prepare them for what was before them. With one voice they cried: "Let us all die in our simplicity." But the holy Prior was torn with anxiety for the many young religious in the community, now leading so holy a life, but who would soon be forced to leave God's house, and be thrown amid the dangers of an irreligious world. "Would," he said, "that it might be as you say; and that one death might for all of us be the way to life, but I fear they will not do us so much good nor themselves so much ill. I fear they will put you ancient Fathers and me to death, and send out these youths *in terram non suam*, into a world not theirs." He felt so keenly their danger that he seemed almost tempted to comply with the King's demands, but he ended with our Lord's words: *Qui aliquid amat plus quam me, non est me dignus*—"He that loveth aught more than Me is not worthy of Me;" and thus resolved he exhorted his brethren to join him in making diligent preparation for their approaching combat. This preparation lasted three days. On the first he urged them all to purify their hearts by a general confession: on the second day he made them a pathetic address on the necessity of charity,

patience, and a firm adherence to God in the day of trial, ending with the words, "It is better for us to undergo a short suffering here for our sins, than to lay up for ourselves eternal torments." Then he added: "Dearest Fathers and brethren, what you see me do, I beseech you do likewise," and immediately rising from his seat he went towards the oldest monk of the house and kneeling down before him, humbly asked his forgiveness for all the excesses and offences he might have committed against him in thought, word, or deed. He went thus to each religious, one by one, on both sides of the choir, down to the last lay-brother, all the while shedding abundance of tears. All the others followed his example, each in turn asking pardon of his brethren. The third day being come, he offered a solemn Votive Mass of the Holy Ghost, to obtain the special graces they would all need. When all hearts were thus fervently disposed, we are not surprised to learn from Dom Chauncy that the Holy Spirit vouchsafed them a very special grace. At the moment of the Elevation there was heard the sound of a gentle wind perceptible to the bodily ear, but much more to the hearts of all present. The holy Prior at the same moment was visited with such an abundance of devout tears that for a long time he was unable to go on with his Mass, and all the rest were filled with a spirit of joy; whilst afterwards as they spoke of what had happened there was a holy strife of humility among them, the Prior attributing it to the devotion of his sons, and they to the sanctity of their Father.

During the following days Divine Providence sent on a visit to the Charterhouse the two brethren predestined to be the companions of Blessed John's martyrdom. These were Dom Robert Lawrence, Prior of the Convent of Beauvale, formerly a religious of the London Charterhouse, and, two days later, Dom Augustine Webster, a monk of the house of Shene, and Prior of the Convent of Axholme, in Lincolnshire.

The two visitors seem to have learned for the first time on their arrival the danger hanging over the convent, a danger which had now become immediate. For the King had heard of the Prior's preparations to resist his will, and was enraged against him. It was by no accident that the storm first broke over the poor religious of St. Bruno. The whole of the King's tyrannical pride and strength of will was now committed to carrying through the schism. For his success in this it was all-important to bend to his will, or to strike down ruthlessly, those who stood highest in the estimation of the people. It was no doubt this consideration which determined the first victims of the persecution.

Meanwhile the three Priors, to leave nothing undone that offered any hope of peace, went together to implore Cromwell, the King's "Vicar General," to obtain for them some mitigation of the oath which they knew was about to be tendered to them. But his only answer was to order them at once as prisoners to the Tower.

The conflict which the Blessed John had long foreseen was now upon them. It is a consolation

to have a testimony to their courage and constancy from an adversary. "Divers were sent to them in prison by the King's commandment," writes Thomas Starkey, "to instruct them. They were so blinded and sturdy that they could neither see the truth in the cause nor 'give convenient obedience due to [from?] such persons as of themselves cannot see the truth,' . . . affirming the same, by their blind, superstitious knowledge, to be to the salvation of man of necessity, and that this superiority of the Pope was a sure truth and manifest of the law of God, and instituted by Christ as necessary to the conservation of the spiritual unity of this mystical body of Christ. In this blindness their superstitious minds were stabled."<sup>1</sup> After a week's imprisonment the King's Commissaries and with them Cromwell himself, came to demand of them the oath, by which they were to renounce and deny the authority and jurisdiction of the Holy See and acknowledge the King as the supreme head of the Church in England in spiritual as well as temporal things. They offered to comply if they might add the saving clause "as far as the Divine law permits." If we are surprised to find men of God, men so soon to lay down their lives for His cause, ready to make a concession which seems to go so near compromising the faith and the unity of the Church, we must bear in mind the perplexities of an untried situation, the anxiety for others dependent on them, and especially that we have the very best proof that the reservation was, and was well understood to be,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 801.

a solid reality; for Cromwell peremptorily refused to accept it. "I will have no condition," he said, "I care nothing what the Church has held or taught. Will you agree to the oath or not?" Then they firmly declared that the fear of God would not allow them to contradict or abandon the Catholic Church, of which St. Augustine had said that he would not believe the Gospel of Christ unless the Church so taught and instructed him. This answer sealed their fate.<sup>1</sup> On the 29th of April, they were brought to trial in Westminster Hall. The indictment against them is still extant and accuses them of declaring, on the 26th of April, at the Tower of London, that "the King our Sovereign Lord is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England."<sup>2</sup> The offence against the Statute law was of course evident, and moreover the holy confessors resolutely persevered in the offence. But an unexpected difficulty arose. The jury refused to give a verdict against them, and put off their finding till the next day. In vain did Cromwell send to demand the cause of their delay; in vain did he send again to threaten them with a like fate if they did not forthwith bring in a verdict of guilty; the whole of the next day was spent in discussion, these worthy men recoiling from the guilt of giving up the servants of God to a cruel death. At length Cromwell in a rage came himself, and so terrified them that he

<sup>1</sup> It was made the formal subject of the indictment. The interview was summed up in a paper now in the Record Office (*Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.* vol. viii. n. 565), notarially attested and dated 20 April, 1535.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 609.



succeeded in overbearing their resistance, upon which sentence of death was passed on them as in cases of high treason.<sup>1</sup>

Their martyrdom, a memorable one, the first of a long series, as glorious as it is sorrowful, extending over a century and a half, was fixed for the fifth day from their condemnation, the 4th of May. Two other confessors of the Faith were to suffer with them, Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine monk, and John Haile or Hall, the aged Vicar of Isleworth.

By special order of the King, as it would appear, the martyrs were not only to suffer to the utmost extent the cruel agony of the execution, but everything was to be done to degrade them in the eyes of the people. Accordingly, our holy Prior was laid upon a hurdle in his religious habit, and thus, followed by his blessed companions, dragged at the horses' tails for three or four miles through the rough and dirty roads to the place of execution at Tyburn, where many great lords and a vast crowd of other spectators were assembled.<sup>2</sup> After the execu-

<sup>1</sup> From the official papers just quoted, we see that the trial of the Carthusians extended over three days. The Grand Jury were returned on Saturday, the 24th of April. On Wednesday, the 28th of April, before the Petty Jury, the Priors pleaded *Not Guilty*. On Thursday, the 29th, they pleaded *Guilty*, and received sentence. Thus the record proves that there was an irregularity, without stating what it was. Chauncy's explanation, given above, is supported by a sub-contemporary MS. in the British Museum, Arundel 152, fol. 308. Cromwell was on the Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, which would have facilitated his arbitrary action. Cf. Hendriks, *London Charterhouse*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish Ambassador writes to Charles V. on the next day: "It is altogether a new thing that the Dukes of Richmond and Norfolk, the Earl of Wiltshire, his son, and other lords and courtiers,

tioner had knelt down and asked and received his forgiveness, he was told to go up the ladder dressed as he was, for in pursuance of the plan already mentioned, the martyrs were to be hanged in their religious habits. A thick rope too had been prepared in order that they might not be strangled by the fall but kept alive for the butchery afterwards. Whilst he was on the ladder, one of the King's councillors present among the throng urged him to yield to the royal command, promising him pardon. He in reply, addressed the spectators, of whom several thousands were present, in very few words: "I call God to witness, and beg of you all likewise to bear me witness at the dread judgment day, that here, about to die, I declare publicly that I refuse to comply with the will of our Lord the King, not out of any pertinacity, malice, or rebellious disposition, but only from the fear of God, lest I should offend His Sovereign Majesty, seeing our holy Mother the Church has decreed and determined otherwise than the King and his Parliament has ordained; wherefore I am obliged, in conscience, and am also ready and not dismayed, to suffer these and all possible torments rather than oppose the teaching of the Church. Pray for me, and pity my brethren whose unworthy prior I have been." He prayed aloud for some time, reciting the psalm, "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." When he had said the words, "Into Thy

were present at the execution, quite near the sufferers. People say that the King himself would have liked to see the butchery, which is very probable, seeing that nearly all the Court, even those of the Privy Chamber were there—his principal chamberlain, Norris, bringing with him forty horses." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii, n. 666.)

hands I commend my spirit," the ladder was turned, but the rope was immediately cut, and falling to the ground, he began at once to revive. Then he was dragged to the quartering block, and with rough violence stripped of his clothes. The ignominious and barbarous dismemberment followed. The executioner ripped him up, tore out his entrails and cast them into the fire. The blessed martyr during this agony uttered no complaint, but prayed incessantly. When almost at the point of death he cried out with fervour, "Most holy Lord Jesus, have mercy on me in this hour." And as the hangman seized his heart with his hand to tear it out, he said, "Good Jesus, what will ye do with my heart?"

A moment more and the first palm was won, the first martyr crowned in the terrible persecution on which the Church was entering. The holy remains underwent the usual indignities of being cut up into quarters, parboiled in a cauldron, and set up upon spikes in different parts of the city. But Blessed John Houghton was conqueror in the fight, and as we are now able to declare with the authority of Holy Church, reigns among the princes of God's Kingdom.

He was soon joined by his blessed companions, Dom Lawrence and Dom Webster. Unfortunately, no account of their lives previous to the persecution has come down to us. Their martyrdom seems to have had one circumstance of horror which their glorious predecessor was spared. According to a contemporary account, "it is believed that one

saw the other's execution fully carried out before he died—a pitiful and strange spectacle.”<sup>1</sup>

The writer adds: “It is long since persons have been known to die with greater constancy. No change was noticed in their colour or tone of speech, and while the execution was going on they preached and exhorted the bystanders with the greatest boldness to do well, and obey the King in everything that was not against the honour of God and the Church.” They thus kept up in the sight of the cruel torments so soon to be inflicted upon themselves, the spirit of holy courage and joy with which they set out on their way to martyrdom. “As Sir Thomas More,” says Roper, “in the Tower, chanced on a time looking out of his window, to behold one Master Reynolds, a religious, learned and virtuous Father of Syon, and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matter of the Supremacy and Matrimony, going out of the Tower to execution, he, as one longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, then standing there beside him: ‘Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed Fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths, as bridegrooms to their marriage. Wherefore thereby mayest thou see, mine own good daughter, what a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a strait and penitential and painful life, religiously, and

<sup>1</sup> The paper referred to is in the Vatican Archives, and is endorsed—*Anglia. Mors monachi unius S. Brigitta, trium Carthusianorum et unius presbyteri secularis in Anglia. 1535. (Letters and Papers, vol. viii. n. 661, from Vatican, Arm. xi, caps x. xi. n. xxxi. fol. 103.)*

such as have in the world, like worldly wretches (as thy poor father hath done) consumed all their time in pleasure and ease, licentiously.'"<sup>1</sup>

And thus from the joy of suffering for God on earth, they passed to the joy of possessing Him in Heaven.

E. S. K.

SPECIAL AUTHORITIES.—The chief authority for the lives of the Carthusian Martyrs is Dom Maurice Chauncy, *Historia aliquot nostri sæculi martyrum*. This was probably written in 1539, and printed at Mayence in 1550. There were many subsequent editions, Munich 1573, Bruges 1583, Brussels (Edit. Arn. Havensius) 1608, &c.—and recently, 1888, with great care at Montreuil.

Father Van Ortroy has made some valuable studies upon the text in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, vi. 35; xiv. 249, 268, &c.; xxii. 51. From these it appears that we have three recensions, (1) *The Editio Princeps* of 1550, (2) an abbreviated form known through MSS. at Vienna and the Hague. (3) A different abbreviation and continuation down to 1564, preserved in Vatican MS., Miscellanea. Arm. lxiv. vol. 28, fol. 92. The texts of these are published, but not the collations of the "Author's MS." in the Cambridge University Library (Ff. iv. 23).

Dom Lawrence Hendriks, *The London Charterhouse, its Monks and its Martyrs*, &c. (1889), contains an elaborate study of all the known sources. Prior Dom Victor M. Doreau, *Henri VIII. et les Martyrs de la Chartreuse de Londres*, Paris, 1890, resumes Dom Hendrik's conclusions, but adds to them.

J. Morris, S.J., *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers related by themselves* (1872), i. pp. 3—29. "Mother Margaret Clements, and the Carthusian Monks."

<sup>1</sup> Roper's *Life of More* (Edit. 1731), p. 87.

## II.

### THE BLESSED JOHN HAILE, *SECULAR PRIEST.*

*Tyburn, 4 May, 1535.*

THE Blessed John Haile,<sup>1</sup> Vicar of Isleworth, or Thistleworth as it was then called, was the first priest of the secular clergy who suffered in the cause of the Catholic religion under Henry VIII. His history, like that of many of our martyrs, begins only with the events which led to his death. He is said to have been a man of an edifying life, and to have held the benefice of Chelmsford in Essex before his promotion to Isleworth on the 13th of August, 1521, but this is all we know of him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The martyr's name is also written Hale and Hall.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed John Haile had lands in Worcestershire which he sold just before his attainder to John Pakyngton for a hundred marks. (*Letters and Papers*, vol. ix. n. 314.)

He was also a fellow of King's Hall, Cambridge. This we learn from a letter of Gregory Blyth, the Master, who writes to Cromwell, 30 April, 1535, that he has accomplished his commands in sequestrating to the King's use such goods as Mr. John Hale, the King's prisoner, has in this College. Though he has a right to nominate to the vacancy caused by Hale he forbears to do so till he knows Cromwell's pleasure. He recommends however Geoffrey Bagotte, who needs help from the death of his father. (*Ibid.* viii. n. 615.)

When Henry had proclaimed his unholy union with Anne Boleyn, caused her to be crowned queen, and procured an Act of Parliament settling the succession to the throne on her offspring, there could no longer remain a doubt in the mind of any honest observer that he had declared open war on the Church of God.

It was then that the aged Vicar of Isleworth began to lament to his friends the sad prospect which lay before them. A fellow-priest named Feron or Fern, of Teddington, who was a young man, was his principal confidant. Haile complained to him in bitter terms of the King's cruelty in oppressing and spoiling the Church, declared that he was a heretic, compared him to the worst princes who had ever governed the country, and enlarged on the notorious vices of his private life, on his repudiation of Queen Catherine and his taking to himself "a wife of fornication." He also referred to certain prophecies of Merlin, which he interpreted of Henry, and predicted there would be a rising against him in Ireland and Wales, which would be joined by multitudes in England. His expression, that *he himself would stand in the stead of a man*, possibly signified that he deemed the peril to religion and the nation to be so extreme, as to justify the taking of arms against the prince.

All this was expressed by Haile in the most vehement and unmeasured language, and was taken down by Feron on paper. This memorandum was the so-called "slandrous bill" on which the martyr was tried and condemned to death. It must how-

ever be remembered, as Mr. Gairdner remarks, that Feron retained these words in his memory for no less than ten months and wrote down the effect of them in the Tower, no doubt when under examination, 10 March, 1535.<sup>1</sup>

Both Haile and Feron were arrested and tried by the same special Commission appointed to pass judgment on the three Carthusian Priors and the Blessed Richard Reynolds.

All the prisoners were brought before the court on the same occasion, all were condemned to the penalties of high treason, and all, except Feron who obtained a pardon, were executed in the same manner at Tyburn.

The indictments however were different.<sup>2</sup> The Carthusians and Reynolds were sentenced simply for rejecting the Royal Supremacy, according to the Act 26 Henry VIII., passed on the 18th of November, 1534; whereas Haile and Feron were charged with offences committed between the 2nd and 20th of May, before the Act of Supremacy was law, but in violation of the Act 25 Henry VIII., known as the Act for the establishment of the King's succession, which enacted that any person who should by writing, printing, or any exterior act or deed maliciously do anything to the peril of the King, or to the prejudice of his marriage, &c., should be guilty of high treason.

In the records, which have been preserved,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. p. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Third Report of Deputy Keeper of Public Records*, App. ii. p. 237. (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. nn. 565, 609, 666.)



there is nothing to show that the question of the Supremacy was formally proposed to these two prisoners. They were charged with the offence of stating that the King was a heretic and an enemy of the Church, in order to excite sedition and deprive him of his crown and his life, and also "to prejudice and scandalize the lawful marriage between the King and the Lady Anne his lawful wife."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the jury might think of the former of these accusations or of its proofs, the latter was indisputably a religious question, involving a doctrine of the Faith, for which the Blessed John Fisher, while pleading against the divorce, had declared that he would willingly lay down his life; and both by the law were made capital offences. Nor is it a new thing in the history of persecution, so to blend political and religious charges, as to make it possible to allege that the victims have suffered for the one

<sup>1</sup> The "execrable words" charged against Haile in the indictment are as follows :

"Syth the realm of England was first a realm, was there never in it so great a robber and pyller of the Commonwealth read of nor heard of as is our King. And not only we that be of the spirituality by his wrongs be oppressed and robbed of our livings, as if we were his utter enemies, enemies to Christ, and guilty of His death, but also thus ungodly he doth handle innocents and also highly learned and virtuous men, not only robbing them of their livings and spoiling them of their goods, but also thrusting them into perpetual prison, so that it is too great pity to hear; and more to be lamented than any good Christian man's ears may abide. And he doth the same as if by that means he would revenge his own injuries and the injuries of the Christian faith, by whose title in a marvellous fashion he boasteth to himself to be above and to excel all other Christian kings and princes, thereby being puffed with vainglory and pride, where of a truth he is the

and not for the other. Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador, writing of the death of the Carthusians, which had taken place the day before, adds, "The same fate has overtaken a priest [Haile] for having spoken and written concerning the life and government of that King."<sup>1</sup> But the sense of the nation was assuredly, that the true cause of his death, however complicated by legal phraseology, was his fidelity to the ancient Faith. The Papal Nuncio in France saw letters from England dated the 5th of May, in which all the sufferers were spoken of as having died for the same cause, *i.e.*, for resisting the Royal Supremacy; and when Chapuys summarized his first news he used a similar form.<sup>2</sup> Chauncy<sup>3</sup>

most cruellest capital heretic, defacer and treader under foot of Christ and of His Church, continually applying and minding to extinct the same. . . . And if thou wilt deeply look upon his life, thou shalt find it more foul and stinking than a sow, wallowing and defiling herself in any filthy place; for how great soever he is, he is fully given to his foul pleasure of the flesh and other voluptuousness. And look how many matrons be in the Court, or given to marriage, these almost all he hath violated, so often neglecting his duty to his wife and offending the holy Sacrament of Matrimony, and now he hath taken to his wife of fornication, this matron Anne, not only to the highest shame and undoing of himself, but also of this realm. . . . Three parts of England is against the King. . . . The Commons see well enough a sufficient cause of rebellion and insurrection, and truly we of the Church shall never live merrily until that day come." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 609.) These words come to us edited by a bitterly hostile hand. Haile, as we shall see, admitted that he had uttered them, and only pleaded that ill-health had diminished his responsibility. We may however still feel sure that a more equitable reporter would have inserted many qualifying and explanatory clauses, which are now lost to us. The martyr at first pleaded "Not guilty."

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 666.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* nn. 726, 786.

<sup>3</sup> Chauncy, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>.

speaks of the seculars (Haile and Feron, though he does not name them) as having to meet the same charge as the monks, that is, of having written or spoken certain things against the King's Majesty. Some fifty years later, Sander<sup>1</sup> bears witness to the same tradition, and says of Haile, that "having striven lawfully he obtained the reward of the heavenly calling," and about the same time, under the eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff, he was represented with the other martyrs on the walls of the Church of the College in Rome. Everyone indeed who can take a broad view of the circumstances of the case must come to the conclusion that Haile really suffered for his religion. His complaints, however much exaggerated, were notoriously founded upon fact. They had only been uttered in private, and that more than a year before. It was not pretended that the State had actually suffered any evil consequences because of them. Yet he was tried and executed in his clerical robes in company with religious of known sanctity, and shortly before More and Fisher. What interpretation were the people meant to put upon all this, except that excuses were being sought for harassing the Church, and that no virtue and no ecclesiastical rank would be of any protection to clerics who resisted to bend their consciences at the King's command?

On their first appearance before the court, 28 April, both Haile and Feron pleaded *not guilty*; but

<sup>1</sup> Sander, *de Schismate*, Edit. Lewis, p. 118. The allusion is to 2 Tim. ii. 5.

after being remanded, they withdrew their defence, and pleaded *guilty* to the indictment. Haile acknowledged the truth of the evidence brought against him, and "that he had maliciously slandered the King, Queen, and the Council, for which he asked the forgiveness of God, the King and Queen Anne, and will continue sorrowful during his life, which stands only in the King's will."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haile's letter to the Council is calendared in *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 567. It is a most pathetic document. The writer was a sick and aged man, and he evidently felt his position keenly. The paper is headed with the touching prayer, *ſhus Saluator mundi miserere mei quia timor mortis conturbat me*. In it he says: "I fell and hurt my leg at Wyngham, at Allhallowtide was twelvemonth, and remained till about Candlemas next. On Saturday after Ash Wednesday I fell into a fervent ague. How long I continued, with various relapses, the parishioners of Isleworth know, so that I took not my journey through whole five weeks before Michaelmas last, and lost 'our Lady's quarter' ended the midsummer before that by my sickness. Will nevertheless report as well as I can, with whom I talked and in what manner of the King's grace. . . . Had also conversations with Skydmore, with Sir Thomas [Mody] my priest and with Master Leeke" [these were his accusers], "and once, I think about two years ago, of the Acts of Parliament made against Churchmen with the Prior of Hounslow, who offered to show me a prophecy . . . but we had no leisure to speak together further, for we only met at the New Inn where Mr. Young, Awnsam and his wife and others dined with us. . . . And as to Mr. Feron my wits were so troubled with sickness that I cannot perfectly remember what he rehearsed. . . . I was sick long after, and, being aged and oblivious, did not see him until we met at the Secretary's at the Rolls." This letter was written about the 20th of April.

While confessing to the substantial truth of the charges brought against him by Feron, Leeke, Skydmore, and Mody, Blessed John Haile "gave as his authority for several of the scandals he had uttered against the King the name of one of his accusers. He had conversed with Mr. Skydmore 'concerning the King's marriage and other behaviours of his bodily lust.' . . . We hear nothing," adds Mr. Gairdner, "of the original reporters of these stories being

Every good Christian, as death approaches, desires to make peace with all whom he has offended, and is glad, as far as truth will permit, to withdraw all the ungracious words he may have used. So the Blessed John Haile, who frankly owns that the fear of death had fallen upon him, asks pardon of those whom he felt that he had too freely assailed. His words, however, though uttered at a moment when he was evidently most anxious to satisfy the King, as far as his conscience would permit, convey no retractation of his opinion as to the irreligious

called to account. Perhaps it was not so much the statement of facts that was objected to, as the expression of displeasure at them." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. Preface, p. xxix.)

In the preface to the same volume Mr. Gairdner remarks: "The complaints of individual priests in this volume are no doubt insignificant in point of number, but we must presume that where one clergyman spoke out and was informed against, a hundred viewed the new state of affairs with equal ill-will. Nor were those who spoke out, as some may be inclined to suppose, mere blind devotees, whose unprogressive minds could not accommodate themselves to the spirit of a new era. In fact, it was the general opinion that royal supremacy plainly and openly avowed, was an anomaly that could not last." (*Ibid.* p. xxvii.)

The learned editor further proves that not only Bishop Fisher and clergymen like Blessed John Haile, but nobles like Lord Darcy, the Earl of Northumberland, Lord Sandes, "who was believed to be the most loyal, as he was undoubtedly one of the most valiant of Henry's captains," and others begged Chapuys to assure the Emperor that they hoped he would interfere on behalf of God's Church. Lord Darcy said there were sixteen hundred of the noblemen and gentry of the north, who loyal like himself in all matters that did not touch the conscience, considered the King's conduct an outrage against God and religion, of which they were anxious to wash their hands. Gairdner adds: "We need not wonder that other lords dissembled. The atmosphere of the Court had become unpleasant even to men not commonly squeamish in mere matters of morality." (*Ibid.* p. iv.)

acts of Henry, or as to the invalidity of his union with Anne. It is true that he gives her the title of Queen; but civil rank and honours are at the disposal of the sovereign, who confers them on whom he pleases, and who in this instance had thus distinguished Anne Boleyn, and caused her to be recognized as Queen by the legislature.

Sentence of high treason was pronounced on both Haile and Feron. The latter received a pardon, and perhaps the same mercy would have been extended to Haile, had his submission been deemed satisfactory by the Council. A more glorious end was before him, and he had the supreme honour of being numbered as the fourth of that holy company of martyrs who suffered for the Catholic Faith at Tyburn on the 4th of May, 1535.

A literal translation of the conclusion of the contemporary Vatican document, from which we have quoted before, may well be inserted here.<sup>1</sup>

“It was a pitiful and strange spectacle, for certainly it is a long time since men have been known to suffer death with greater constancy. In their modesty, look, colour and speech no sign of human weakness was observed, and [they showed] great faith and firmness while the execution was taking place. They preached and they exhorted the nobles [*principi*] and the bystanders to do good, and to live honestly, and to serve the King well and faithfully, and to pay him obedience in all things except in those that are contrary to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 661.

honour of God and of His Church, for the Scripture says that it is more necessary to obey God than men. They protested that they had never been disobedient in anything, except in this. In what they had said and done, they had spoken and protested against his Majesty's orders, as contrary to the Holy Gospel. For this reason they also accepted death, and said that God was giving them a great grace in making them die to uphold this truth, and that in good reason the King could not be Supreme Head of the Church of England."

R. S. and ED.

### III.

## THE BLESSED RICHARD REYNOLDS,

OF THE ORDER OF ST. BRIDGET.

*Tyburn, 4 May, 1535.*

THE Monastery of Syon on the left bank of the Thames and in the parish of Isleworth was the religious home of the Blessed Richard Reynolds. It belonged to the Order of St. Bridget, and as it was the only house of the kind in England and differed in certain respects from other monastic institutes, it may be interesting to give a few details as to its origin and introduction into this country.

The Bridgettine Order derives its name from the Swedish princess St. Bridget, who on the death of her husband retired to the Cistercian Monastery of Alvastra. From there, she went in 1346 to lay the first stone of the Monastery of Watstein, where she instituted the Order of Our Saviour, as it was originally called, under the rule of St. Augustine, to which were added certain special Constitutions, communicated to her by revelation, and in due time approved by the Holy See.

One of the peculiarities of the Bridgettine Institute, though in earlier times it had been a



common arrangement both on the Continent and in England, was that houses should be double monasteries, as they were called, comprising in strictly separate enclosures a community of men and one of women. The object of this plan being mainly the service of the Church and the spiritual direction of the nuns, the brethren were much less numerous than the Sisters, and were subject to the Abbess in all temporal matters, while in spiritual concerns the superintendence was in their hands.

St. Bridget fixed the number of nuns in each house at sixty; the men were to be thirteen priests, four deacons and eight lay-brothers.

The Order was introduced into England about A.D. 1406 by Henry Baron Fitzhugh, who had accompanied Philippa, daughter of Henry IV. into Sweden on the occasion of her marriage. He was so greatly edified by what he heard and saw of the fervour of the religious, that he made proposals to the Superiors for a foundation on his own estates. The project was accepted and sanctioned by the King and Queen of Sweden, and a small colony soon reached this country. After being maintained for several years by Fitzhugh, they were placed by King Henry V. in A.D. 1415 in his royal foundation of Syon, which before his death he endowed with great munificence. For the space of one hundred and thirty years, from its foundation till its suppression this holy community had perfectly maintained the reputation of sanctity and faithful observance, which it had enjoyed from the first.

Nevertheless being wealthy it was one of the

first to fall under the grasp of the spoiler. The only alternatives offered were absolute submission to the will of the tyrant and acknowledgment of his impious pretensions or complete destruction.

The Blessed Richard Reynolds was the victim chosen by the King to meet the first assault and break the courage of his companions, and chosen by God for the honour of being one of the first band of martyrs who shed their blood in defence of the Supremacy of the See of Peter.

We know but little of his early life and nothing of his parentage, of the place of his birth or of his elementary education. He was most probably born about the year 1492, and was a member of Christ's College, Cambridge, placed there it would seem by Blessed John Fisher, its quasi-founder. It is said that he was a north-country man, like Fisher himself; but it is possible that he belonged to the Devonshire family of Reynolds of Pinhoe, near Exeter. In 1513 he was made Bachelor of Divinity and Apostolic Preacher, but the University "grace" declares that he was even then about to enter religion.<sup>1</sup>

He was therefore a member of the Order of St. Bridget and of the house of Syon for more than twenty years. He was a man of great learning and was a Doctor of Theology, familiar with the Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages; and, what is more, zealous in the ministry of the Sacrament of Penance and in the instruction of the people, venerated by all for the acknowledged sanctity of his life, which was

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortoy, *Vie de Fisher*, p. 49.

manifested, as his contemporary, Dom Chauncy, adds, in his angelic countenance.

It was clear to those in power, that if such a man could be induced to admit the new doctrine of the royal supremacy, numbers of the clergy and laity would readily follow his example, Whereas, if his constancy could not be overcome, it was hoped that the terror of a like fate might deter the less bold from all opposition. The blessed man was accordingly arrested on the charge of refusing to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of the King. He was submitted to a preliminary examination, and on the 29th of April tried before the Special Commission, of which the Lord Chancellor Audley was president, on the indictment, that on the 25th of April, 27 Henry VIII., at the Tower of London he had declared "the King our sovereign Lord is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England."<sup>1</sup>

✓ His companions under the same accusation were the three Carthusian Priors, that of the Blessed John Haile being different in form. The following is the contemporary account of the examination of Blessed Richard Reynolds.<sup>2</sup> "Among them a D.D. of Syon Abbey of the Order of St. Bridget was (interrogated by the Chancellor why he had persisted in an opinion, against which so many lords and bishops in Parliament and the whole realm had ✓ decreed. He replied, 'I had intended to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was questioned

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 609 (p. 231).

<sup>2</sup> "His defence," says Mr. Gairdner, "was singularly calm and argumentative." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. p. xxx.)

by Herod, and not to answer. But since you compel me to clear both my own conscience and that of the bystanders, I say that if we propose to maintain opinions by proofs, testimonies or reasons, mine will be far stronger than yours, because I have all the rest of Christendom in my favour—I dare even say all this kingdom, although the smaller part holds with you, for I am sure the larger part is at heart of our opinion, although outwardly, partly from fear and partly from hope, they profess to be of yours.’ On this he was commanded by the Secretary, under the heaviest penalties of the law, to declare who held with him. He replied, ‘All good men of the Kingdom.’ He added, ‘As to proofs of dead witnesses, I have in my favour all the General Councils, all the historians (*scriptori*), the holy doctors of the Church for the last fifteen hundred years, especially St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Gregory; and I am sure that when the King knows the truth, he will be very ill pleased, or rather indignant against certain bishops, who have given him such counsel.’”

He was ordered to speak no more, but merely to reply to the question, why he had, against the King’s authority, maliciously counselled many persons within the kingdom not to be of the King’s opinion? “From the time I was first brought into court,” he said, “I answered as if I were before God, that I would never declare my opinion for malice against the King or any other person unless it was asked me in confession, when I could not refuse for discharge of my conscience. It is true I am

much grieved that the King should be in such error. Therefore I have never said it in public, nor have ever spoken of it, except as I have said above; and if I had not done so, I would do it now, because I am so bound to God and my conscience; and in this I do not mean to offend God, or the Prince, or any ✓one." He was ordered to hold his tongue, and he added, "Since you do not wish me to speak further, *secundum legem vestram judicate me.*"

After hearing his sentence, he said with the greatest constancy, "This is of the things of this world." He then prayed the judges to obtain for him two or three days of life, considering that he had been eight days as if irregular (*come irregular*) in the Tower of London, and in those three he proposed to prepare his conscience and die like a good religious man. They answered that it was not in their power, but in the grace of the King. He then said, *Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium.*

Such is the account of the Blessed Martyr's trial, from the copy in the Public Record Office, of the original in the Vatican Archives,<sup>1</sup> and it is in perfect agreement with the abridged narrative of Chauncy, in his *Historia aliquot nostri sæculi Martyrum* (fol. 8<sup>b</sup>). The expression *come irregular* is not apparently to be understood of canonical irregularity, but as implying that during his imprisonment the regularity of his devotional exercises had been interfered with.

How seriously this condemnation was regarded by those in authority is shown by a letter from

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 661.

Cranmer to Cromwell, of the 30th of April, the following day, in which he says, "Whereas the Prior of Axholme, named Webster, and Master Reynolds of Syon are attainted of high treason for offending against the late statute, made for suppressing the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, I marvel at both, as they are learned men. . . . If there is no other offence alleged against them, it will much more tend to the conversion of others to convert their consciences by sincere doctrine, and so for them to publish it, than to suffer the penalty of the law. If they were sent to me, I suppose I could do much in their behalf. Otford, 30 April."<sup>1</sup>

It was also felt that the impression produced by this barbarous act in foreign countries, would be most prejudicial to Henry's reputation; and accordingly after the execution Starkey, one of the King's chaplains, wrote a long letter to Reginald Pole, then residing at Padua (?), to represent that these holy men suffered only for their own obstinacy.

"Three Priors," he says, "and Reynolds of Syon (affirmed the Supremacy of the Pope) of their superstitious knowledge to be to the salvation of man of necessity, and that this superiority of the Pope was a sure truth and manifest of the law of God, and instituted by Christ. . . . Reynolds, whom I have often heard praised by you, would admit no reason to the contrary, though divers were sent to them in prison by the King's commandment to instruct them. . . . This is the truth, for by Mr. Secretary's

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 616. Cranmer also asserts that Webster had once "promised never to support that opinion."

licence I was admitted to hear Reynolds' reason and confer with him, and found in him neither strong reason to maintain his purpose, nor great learning to defend it. I conferred with him gladly, for I was sorry to see a man of such virtue and learning die in such a blind and superstitious opinion. But nothing would avail."<sup>1</sup>

The execution of the five martyrs, that is, of the three Carthusian Priors, the Blessed Richard Reynolds, and the Blessed John Haile, took place at Tyburn on the 4th of May, 1535, as has been related in the life of Prior Houghton. The sentence was carried out to the letter, and no detail of the barbarous cruelty was omitted. The martyrs were executed one by one in the presence of some of the principal men of the King's Court, and each sufferer was compelled to witness the torments of those who preceded him.

A writer in the reign of Queen Mary says: "Which Reynolds, being the last that was executed, and seeing them cruelly quartered, and their bowels taken out, preached unto them and comforted them, promising them a heavenly banquet and supper for their sharp breakfast taken patiently for their Master's sake. He never changed colour nor was disquieted, and then in the end lastly went to die manfully himself."<sup>2</sup>

Sander adds that the Blessed Richard begged the people to make continual prayer to God for the King, that he who was like Solomon in wisdom

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 801.    <sup>2</sup> Arundel MS. 152, p. 227.

and goodness, when he began to reign, might not, through the blandishments of 'women, fall away like Solomon at the end of his life. A circumstance, which inspired men with great horror at the time and is mentioned by several writers in terms of reprobation, was that they underwent no ceremony of ecclesiastical degradation, as the usage of the country, no less than the sacred canons required, but were executed in their religious or ecclesiastical dress, which in a land hitherto Catholic had always been regarded with veneration by the people.

As a conclusion to this scanty notice of our martyr, we give the testimony borne to his sanctity and many excellences by Cardinal Pole in the third book of his *Defence of the Unity of the Church*. "One of these martyrs I must not pass over without a special notice, as he was intimately known to myself. Reynolds was his name, and he was one who, for the sanctity of his life, might be compared with the very first of those who profess the more exact rule of conduct according to the discipline of Christ, and had moreover, which is a thing seldom found in those who follow that profession, a more than common knowledge of all the liberal arts, a knowledge, too, derived from the original sources. He was well acquainted with the three chief languages, in which all liberal learning is comprised, and, of all the monks in England, was the only one who had this knowledge. To manifest to all future time the praises of his sanctity and doctrine, and to show the height of his piety to Christ and his charity towards his country, one



thing only seemed to be wanting, that in company with the other heroes he should, in this time of so great need, give testimony to the truth with his own blood. He gave it in truth, and was among the first to give it, and that with such constancy of mind, that, as I was told by one who said he was present at the spectacle and had observed most attentively all that took place, when he put his neck within the murderous halter, he seemed rather to be putting on a regal chain than an instrument of death, such was the alacrity manifested in his countenance. O Blessed man! truly worthy of the fullest confidence of thee, O my country!"

R. S.

AUTHORITIES.—M. Chauncy: *Historia aliquot hujus sæculi Martyrum*, fol. 8.

*Third Report of Deputy Keeper of the Records*, App. ii. p. 237.

*Myroure of oure Ladye*, published by Early English Text Society, Edit. J. H. Blunt (1873), § 2, *History of Syon*, pp. xiii. —xix.

#### IV.

**BLESSED HUMPHREY MIDDLEMORE,  
BLESSED WILLIAM EXMEW, AND  
BLESSED SEBASTIAN NEWDIGATE,**

*CARTHUSIANS.*

*Tyburn, 19 June, 1535.*

It was evidently hoped that the death of the Blessed John Houghton and his companions would strike terror into the rest of the community, and the men in authority were determined to lose no time in taking advantage of the supposed impression. One of the quarters of the holy Prior with an arm attached was fixed over the gate of the monastery directly after the execution.<sup>1</sup> And before the day had closed one of the Commissaries, Thomas Bedyll, Archdeacon of Cornwall, arrived armed with books and treatises and plied the Vicar and Procurator, Dom Middlemore and Dom Exmew, for more than an hour and an half with arguments "against the primacy of the Bishop of Rome and also of St. Peter." He departed at length, but left with

<sup>1</sup> Two days after this holy relic fell to the ground as two of the monks met from opposite directions under the gateway. No one else being present they took it away and concealed it, together with his blood-stained hair-shirt, in the hope of sending it abroad.

them the books which he had brought with him. He has recorded the visit himself in a letter written two days later to Cromwell, and we have also his testimony to the result. "Yesterday [that is the day after the visit] they sent me the said books and annotations again home to my house by a servant of theirs, without any word or writing. Wherefore I sent to the Procurator to come and speak with me, seeing I kept my bed by reason of sickness and could not come to him. And at his coming I demanded of him whether he and the Vicar and other of the seniors had seen or heard the said annotations or perused the titles of the books making most for the said matters. And he answered that the Vicar and he and Newdigate had spent the time upon them till nine or ten of the clock at night, and that they saw nothing in them whereby they were moved to alter their opinion. I then declared to him the danger of his opinion, which was like to be the destruction of them and their house for ever; and so far as I could perceive by my communication with the Vicar and Procurator on Tuesday and with the Procurator yesterday, they be obstinately determined to suffer all extremities rather than to alter their opinion, regarding no more the death of their Father in word or countenance, than he were living and conversant among them."<sup>1</sup>

If reports which reached foreign countries were correct, no less a person than the King himself tried

<sup>1</sup> This letter, of which the original is in the British Museum (MSS. Cotton, Cleop. E. iv. 252), is printed in Wright's *Suppression of the Monasteries*, Letter xiv.

his hand at overcoming the constancy of the poor Carthusians. The Bishop of Faenza<sup>1</sup> in a letter of the 6th of June, says, "The King (of France) told him, and the Imperial Ambassador showed him a letter to the same effect, that the King of England went disguised to the Charterhouse, of which they have treated some members so badly, and urged them with many reasons to take him for head of the Church, and not the Pope. To which they replied unanimously, that he might do with their persons what he would, but they would never consent to what they considered unjust."<sup>2</sup>

They knew, no doubt, very well what the issue would be. The policy of blood was fairly inaugurated and they were not likely to be spared. The three monks, accordingly, whom Bedyll had unsuccessfully endeavoured to convince, were marked out as the next victims. Dom Humphrey Middlemore we have met with as Blessed John Houghton's companion in the Tower, in 1534. He was then Procurator, but had become Vicar, or Sub-Prior, perhaps on the holy Prior's second imprisonment. He was succeeded as Procurator by Dom William Exmew, a religious young indeed in years, but of great perfection and especially of extraordinary humility. When he was Procurator he used to retire from choir at the end of the Second Nocturn of Matins, as the rule permitted, full of confusion and in the sincere conviction that

<sup>1</sup> Mgr. Ridolfo Pio, Nuncio at Paris, afterwards created Cardinal by Paul III.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 837.

he was unworthy to stay in the company of his brethren, to sing the praises of God, and that it was for this reason he had been chosen to the office of Judas, as he called it. Dom Sebastian Newdigate, who was of good family and had been brought up in the King's household, was also a religious of great virtue. Three weeks after the martyrdom of Dom Houghton, these three religious were seized and committed to "a most filthy prison." This was the Marshalsea in Southwark, but they were afterwards transferred to the Tower. Cromwell had not yet given up all hope of breaking down their constancy. Nothing but this hope can explain the inhuman cruelty with which they were treated during their imprisonment. From their apprehension on May the 25th, to their trial on June the 12th, a span of more than a fortnight elapsed. During this interval, Chauncy says, that for a whole fortnight they were tightly fastened by iron chains round their necks and legs to posts or columns of the building, never being released for any necessity, and of course unable to sit or lie down or obtain any rest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This story would have been hard to believe on less trustworthy testimony than that of Chauncy. In fact, however, Chauncy is corroborated by several witnesses. (1) There is a relation in the British Museum substantially agreeing with him, but with differences of detail which indicate an independent source. It gives the length of time as 13 days, and says the monks were "chained from their necks and their arms, and their legs fettered with locks and chains." See *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 895; it is stated to be "in a hand of that period." (2) Another relation, *Arundel MS.* n. 152, gives the length of time as 16 days, and adds that no food except bread was given to the sufferers. (3) A letter written during the very time, on

On Friday, "next after the quinzaine of Holy Trinity," i.e., 12th of June, the holy confessors were brought to their trial at Westminster, by Sir Edmund Walsingham, Deputy Constable of the Tower. The indictment, still extant,<sup>1</sup> sets forth as their offence, that each of them did, at Stepney, on May the 25th, say to several of the King's true subjects, "I cannot nor will consent to be obedient to the King's highness as a true, lawful, and obedient subject, to take and repute him to be supreme head in earth of the Church of England under Christ." Every means had been used to overcome the confessors of the Faith. Their disobedience to the statute was unquestionable, and a verdict was returned accordingly. A significant sentence follows in the Record of the sessions. "The prisoners have no lands, goods, or chattels." On their condemnation they made but one request, that they might have the consolation of receiving Holy Communion before their death. "But, as Judge Spelman writ, 'the court would not grant it, since that was never done in such cases but by order of the King.'"<sup>2</sup> A week later, Friday, the 19th of June, their martyrdom took place at Tyburn, with the same barbarities

June 8th, by the Nuncio at Paris, is still extant, an abstract of which is given in *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 846. The writer "hears that the Carthusians whom the King himself tried to persuade to recognize him as head of the Church, are in prison with chains round their necks and will certainly be put to death, but perhaps not so publicly, for fear of the displeasure of the people, which was shown at the death of the others."

<sup>1</sup> It is to be found in the *Baga de Secretis*.

<sup>2</sup> Burnet, *Hist. Ref.* i. 706. Edit. 1829.

which have been described in that of the three Priors, and thus, after an interval of six weeks and three days, they were reunited to their glorious Father.

E. S. K.

A few more details as to these martyrs may here be added. Dom Sebastian Newdigate was the son of John Newdigate, Esquire, King's Sergeant and lord of the manor of Harefield, in Middlesex, whose tomb may still be seen in Harefield Church. It is an altar-tomb with a brass representing the Sergeant in coif, gown and hood, his wife, Amphelys Nevill, and their seventeen children. Harefield Place, the martyr's home, stood a little to the north of the church, but few traces of it remain. Sebastian was educated at Cambridge, and later on became a great favourite at Court. He was admitted a Privy Councillor. He married early and had one daughter, whom he named Amphelys, after his mother. She subsequently married a certain John Braeme. Of his brothers and sisters, John, the eldest, is also buried at Harefield. Silvester and Dunstan became Knights Hospitallers; George, a monk at Chertsey; Mary, a nun at Syon; Sybil, Prioress of Holywell, London; and Jane married Sir Robert Dormer, Knight, of Wenge, county Bucks.

In the Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria, the grand-daughter of Jane, the martyr's sister, we find some interesting details as to Sebastian. After his wife's early death, he lived on at the Court until the King began to take to evil ways. This alarmed

Lady Dormer, who cautioned her brother as to the dangers of the corruption of the Court. He defended the King, but presently said, "Sister, what shall you say if the next news you hear of me shall be that I am entered to be a monk in the Charterhouse?" "A monk!" she said; "I should be less surprised to see thee hanged!" She lived to see both happen.

When Sebastian found that his sister's fears as to the King's evil designs were indeed too well-founded, he retired to the Charterhouse. This seems to have been about 1524. His sister thinking it was a mere freak of which he would soon weary, went up to London and advised the Prior not to admit him, for it was most unlikely he would persevere. But the Prior assured her that he gave every promise of becoming an excellent religious, whereupon she praised God, and indeed, on seeing her brother she could not restrain her tears, so greatly was he changed. In a very short time the former gay courtier made rapid strides in perfection and became a model of religious observance. The King visited Blessed Sebastian both in the Marshalsea and in the Tower, and did all he could first by mild speeches and fair promises, and then by menaces and injurious words to make him yield to his will. The martyr, quite unmoved by the King's furious harangue, calmly replied: "When in Court I served your Majesty I did it loyally and faithfully, and so continue still your humble servant, although kept in this prison and bonds. But in matters that belong to the Faith and glory of our



Lord Jesus Christ, to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and the salvation of my poor soul, your Majesty must be pleased to excuse me." The King replied: "Art thou wiser and holier than all the ecclesiastics and seculars of my kingdom?" He answered: "I may not judge of others, nor do I esteem myself either wise or holy, being far short in either; only this I assure myself that the faith and doctrine I profess is no new thing, nor now invented, but always among the faithful held for Christian and Catholic. We must obey God rather than man."<sup>1</sup>

Blessed Humphrey Middlemore was of a very ancient Warwickshire family which had its head-quarters at Edgbaston, near Birmingham. The Middlemores acquired Edgbaston by marriage with the heiress of Sir Henry Edgbaston. The family still flourishes in the neighbourhood, and has recently brought out a very handsome and complete family history. From this we glean the following details as to the martyr.

Blessed Humphrey Middlemore is supposed to have been the son of Richard Middlemore, of Edgbaston, Esquire; described in his will as "lord of Eggebaston." He held the manor of Studley and a messuage in Solihull. His will dated 28 November, 1502, was proved 14 March, 1503. He desires to be buried in the Churchyard of St. Bartholomew of Eggebaston. He left money to that church, to Lichfield Cathedral, the guild

<sup>1</sup> For further details see my *Life of Blessed Sebastian Newdigate* (1901).

of the Holy Cross of Birmingham, and that of St. John of Deritend. His wife Margery was daughter of Sir Thomas Throckmorton, of Coughton, near Studley. After her husband's death she took a solemn vow of chastity with the approval of the Bishop of Lichfield.<sup>1</sup>

She was henceforth by the Bishop's command, "to be veiled or clad in a cloak, and to be given the habit of widowhood usual to be assigned to widows of this class at the profession of chastity together with one ring only."

Her will was proved 6 February, 1530.

Of their children we know for certainty only Thomas their heir, and Anne Willington, but most probably William Middlemore, rector of Birdingbury, and Blessed Humphrey are also to be ascribed to them. "In no other line of Middlemores does it seem possible to place the martyr, while it is interesting to note that the name of Humphrey was perpetuated by the Edgbaston Middlemores in the person of Humphrey Middlemore, who was born about 1560, less than thirty years after the martyrdom of his namesake, and also in the succeeding generation. It is likely that the Middlemores of Edgbaston, so deeply attached as they were to the Roman obedience, would thus commemorate the martyrdom of the Proctor of the Charterhouse."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, p. 654.

<sup>2</sup> *Some account of the Family of Middlemore of Warwickshire and Worcestershire*. By W. P. W. Phillimore, M.A., B.C.L. (London). Printed for private circulation, 1901, pp. 29 and 35. Gillow, however,

The Recusant Rolls of a later date indicate how they suffered in their possessions for their steadfast adherence to their religion. Curiously enough, one branch of the family settled at Stepney, whither Cromwell had summoned Blessed Humphrey and his companions, and where the offence which brought them to their deaths was said to have been committed. "Perhaps this early association of the Blessed Humphrey Middlemore and the later association of his kinsmen with the place may not be unconnected."<sup>1</sup>

ED.

(*Dictionary of English Catholics*, vol. v. p. 7), says that Blessed Humphrey was the son of Thomas Middlemore of Edgbaston, by Ann, daughter of Richard Lyttleton, of Pillerton Hall, Staffordshire, ancestor of the Barons Hatherton.

<sup>1</sup> Phillimore, p. 264.

V.

**THE BLESSED JOHN FISHER,**  
*BISHOP OF ROCHESTER, AND CARDINAL.*

*Tower Hill, 22 June, 1535.*

THE Blessed John Fisher was born at Beverley, in Yorkshire, and was the son of Robert and Agnes Fisher, who were mercers in that town. They had four children, of whom John was apparently the youngest, and about seven years old when his father died. His birth has usually been placed in the year 1459, but it was probably ten years later.<sup>1</sup>

He received his early education in his native town, where there was a grammar school connected with the collegiate Church of St. John, and in 1483 was sent to Cambridge. At the University he was placed under the care of William de Melton, fellow of Michael House, a College which occupied part of the site of the present Trinity, and was afterwards absorbed in that great foundation.

In more than one place of his writings Fisher

<sup>1</sup> See Van Ortoy, p. 82, note. His father's will is printed Lewis-Turner, *Life of John Fisher*, though it is wrongly dated. (The real date is 1477.) The error is corrected in the body of the work, vol. i. p. 3. The will has been preserved for us by Thomas Baker, and can be seen in the British Museum. (*Harl.* 7030.)

speaks in terms of praise of his first master at College, calling him a holy and learned man, and expressing his obligations to him.

The future martyr took his Bachelor's degree in 1487, and that of Master in 1491, and was soon afterwards elected fellow of his College, and in due time promoted to the priesthood, on that title.<sup>1</sup> He continued to devote himself to the acquisition of learning, as the proper pursuit of his life at that time, and great was the reputation and influence he gained.

In 1494 he was chosen senior proctor, and three years later, when his master, Melton, was appointed Chancellor of York, he succeeded him as Master of Michael House. In 1501 he took the degree of Doctor in Divinity, and very shortly afterwards became Vice-Chancellor of the University.

While he was proctor, business of the University in 1495 had obliged him to visit the Court at Greenwich, on which occasion, as he has recorded with his own hand in the proctor's book, he was presented to the illustrious and most pious Margaret Countess of Richmond, the mother of King Henry VII. This event led to a change in the hitherto studious course of his life. The Countess soon afterwards chose him for her own chaplain and confessor, in place of a former one, who was nominated to a bishopric.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "On 17 Dec., 1491, Mr. John Fisher of Michael House was ordained priest, his College giving him his title." (*Reg. Rotherham, York Minster Registers*), cf. *Testamenta Eboracensia*, vol. iii. p. 228, note. Surtees Society, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Probably in 1500.

Doctor Fisher was held in the greatest reverence by this holy princess, who though much older than he, treated him with the respect of a daughter, and when her husband died made a public vow of chastity into his hands, and to that added a vow of obedience "to the intent that her works might be more acceptable and of greater merit in the sight of God."

We can barely notice the princely foundations which this great lady made with the counsel of Fisher. The first was the endowment of readerships of Theology in the two Universities, the first person to hold that in Cambridge being Fisher himself, who undertook the onerous duties which were originally attached to this office.

But a greater work than this was the foundation of Christ's College, Cambridge. Before putting herself under the direction of Fisher, it had been the intention of the Countess to found a magnificent chantry for herself and her son in the Abbey Church of Westminster; but the servant of God easily persuaded her that it would be more to His honour to promote the advancement of religion and learning by the foundation of a College.

It was thus that Christ's College in Cambridge was founded;<sup>1</sup> but while this work was in progress a great change took place in the career of Fisher himself. The conscience of Henry VII. had become uneasy, by reason of various nominations to bishoprics which he had made, and in general of his

<sup>1</sup> The royal license to found is dated May 1st, 1505. The College still stands as Fisher built it.

distribution of Church patronage, in which he felt that he had too often been influenced by motives of worldly policy, and he had come to a resolution henceforth to reform his conduct in this important respect.

The King had been much impressed by what he had seen and heard of Fisher, and was convinced that he could not better begin his new course than by presenting him to the vacant see of Rochester.<sup>1</sup> This he did without solicitation or recommendation from any one, and the servant of God would gladly have declined to take upon himself the heavy burden of the pastoral charge.

He yielded, however, to the persuasion of the Lady Margaret and of Bishop Fox of Winchester, and in the year 1504<sup>2</sup> was consecrated Bishop of Rochester, one of the poorest dioceses of England, but one which he could never be induced to change, when others of larger revenues were proposed to him.

The Bishop's new duties did not, however, interfere with his services to his University. About the time of his promotion he was elected Chancellor, and the election was repeated annually for ten successive years, when he was at length chosen to hold the dignity for life. He was also elected to the

<sup>1</sup> Vacant through the translation of the Bishop, Richard Fitz-James, to the see of Chichester.

<sup>2</sup> His election had been confirmed by Pope Julius II., 13 October, 1504. Fisher was only about thirty-five at the time. When Henry VII. paid a visit to Cambridge in 1506, he thanked the King for having promoted him so young to the Episcopate—*Quippe qui paucos annos habuerim*.

headship of Queen's College, the foundation of Margaret of Anjou, having already resigned that of Michael House.

The appointment provided him with a residence at Cambridge, when his duties as Chancellor, or as superintendent of the Countess's foundations required his presence there; but he only held it for three years.

The Lady Margaret's bounty was not yet exhausted by her charitable works, and by the recommendation, or with the sanction of her confessor, she began a still greater undertaking for the University by the foundation of the most important College of St. John.

We cannot here trace the progress of this noble institution, but can merely state that she was called to her reward before either her plans for its endowment or the academical buildings were completed, and that the necessary means were in a great measure provided by the Bishop himself, who also composed the rules for the government of the College.

The Bishop of Rochester never wearied in his services to the University; and these services were not only gracefully acknowledged at the time, but are still thankfully borne in mind by that illustrious body, though it has unhappily abandoned the faith which inspired the good works of the holy prelate.<sup>1</sup>

Great as was his love for Cambridge, and great

<sup>1</sup> Over the entrance to the new Divinity Schools the University has placed two statues, that of Blessed John Fisher and—Archbishop Cranmer!



as was his zeal for learning, the holy man could not satisfy himself that he had done enough, or that it was in his power to do as much as others might. Accordingly, under the conviction that Wolsey, with his unbounded influence and inexhaustible means, would more effectually advance its interests, he obtained the reluctant consent of the University and resigned his office of Chancellor in the year 1514, in favour of the Cardinal.

Though the Blessed John Fisher manifested such zeal for learning and the good estate of the University, in which he had been educated, nevertheless he was before all things a Bishop, and it was to the discharge of his pastoral duties that he especially devoted himself. He held his see, which he would never consent to leave for one more richly endowed or more conspicuous in the sight of men, for the long period of thirty years, and during this interval his reputation was spread throughout Europe, as one of the holiest and most learned prelates in the Church.

Erasmus, who was intimately acquainted with him, speaks of him in his letters as "a divine prelate," and says that in the whole nation "there is not a more learned man or a holier bishop." Cardinal Pole says, "If any one had asked the King, before the violence of his passions had hurried him out of the reach of reason and reflection, which of all the bishops he esteemed most highly, whose affection and fidelity he chiefly relied upon; he would without hesitation have answered, 'the Bishop

of Rochester.' When the question was not put to him, he was accustomed of his own accord to glory, that no other prince or kingdom had so distinguished a prelate. Of this I was witness, when turning to me, on my return from my travels, he said he did not imagine I had met with any one in foreign parts who could be compared with him, either for virtue or learning."<sup>1</sup>

The affection of the holy Bishop for this unhappy King was very great and very constant. He had been especially recommended to his care by his grandmother, the Countess of Richmond, of holy memory; he had been born at Greenwich, within the diocese of Rochester, and frequently resided there, so that he seemed to be a sheep of his own flock.

As has been already mentioned, Fisher had been nominated to the see of Rochester by Henry VII., and according to the usual order then observed, elected by the Chapter, and afterwards formally appointed Bishop by Pope Julius II. by his Bulls from St. Peter's in the year 1504.

He was consecrated in the chapel of Lambeth Palace, 24 November, 1504, by Archbishop Warham, assisted by William Smith, Bishop of Lincoln, the founder of Brazenose College in Oxford, and Richard Nykke, Bishop of Norwich.

The diocese of Rochester was the smallest as well as the poorest in all England, though one of the most ancient and of St. Augustine's own foundation. It comprised only the smaller half of the county of

<sup>1</sup> *Apologia ad Carolum V. Casarem.* § 20 (Phillips' Translation).

Kent, with certain Peculiars in other counties, and contained no town of any considerable importance. All this was matter of rejoicing to the good Bishop, who loved holy poverty and humbly dreaded the responsibility of the government of a larger flock.

The revenues, according to the computation of the times, were only £300 a year, but besides the palace at Rochester he had several residences at his different manors, and a house in Southwark called La Place, situated in Lambeth Marsh, between London Bridge and the present Southwark Bridge.

When necessary duties did not call him abroad, it was the Bishop's delight to spend his days in devotion and study in one or other of these houses, principally at Rochester or Halling; for he went but little to Court, and at home was within easy access of any part of his diocese.

An inventory of his furniture was made at the time of his arrest and is still preserved, and gives proof of the poverty and simplicity of his daily life. His ancient biographer<sup>1</sup> gives a beautiful sketch of his ordinary day, which he reports from the evidence of eye-witnesses.

“He never omitted so much as one collect of his daily service, which he used commonly to say

<sup>1</sup> Père Van Ortoy has proved that this biographer cannot have been Richard Hall, as has been generally supposed on the authority of Pits (*De illustribus Anglia Scriptoribus*), though it is not so easy to discover who he really was. (See *Vie du B. Martyr Jean Fisher*, &c., pp. 72—81.) He suggests that Dr. John Young, who was Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge and President of Pembroke College under Queen Mary, may have been the writer.—ED.

to himself alone, without the help of any chaplain, not in such speed or hasty manner to be at an end, as many will do, but in most reverent and devout manner, so distinctly and tractably pronouncing every word, that he seemed a very devourer of heavenly food, never satiate nor filled therewith. Insomuch as, talking on a time with a Carthusian monk, who much commended his zeal and diligent pains in compiling his book against Luther, he answered again, saying that he wished that time of writing had been spent in prayer, thinking that prayer would have done more good and was of more merit.

"And to help this devotion he caused a great hole to be digged through the wall of his church at Rochester, whereby he might the more commodiously have prospect into the church at Mass and Evensong times. When he himself used to say Mass, as many times he used to do, if he was not letted by some urgent and great cause, ye might then perceive in him such earnest devotion that many times the tears would fall from his cheeks.

"And lest the memory of death might hap to slip from his mind, he always accustomed to set upon one end of the altar a dead man's skull,<sup>1</sup> which was also set before him at his table, as he

<sup>1</sup> In the inventory of his goods, drawn up after his apprehension (27 April, 1534), is mentioned "A St. John's head standing at the end of the altar." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 557. p. 222.) A model of the severed head of St. John Baptist was a not uncommon object of devotion, and nowhere would it be so appropriate as in the private chapel of Blessed John Fisher, who was called to walk so closely in the steps of this his patron saint.

dined or supped. And in all his prayers and other talk he used continually a special reverence to the Name of Jesus.

“Now to those prayers he joined two wings, which were alms and fasting, by the help whereof they might mount the speedier to Heaven. To poor sick persons he was a physician, to the lame he was a staff, to poor widows an advocate, to orphans a tutor, and to poor travellers a host.

“Wheresoever he lay, either at Rochester or elsewhere, his order was to inquire where any poor sick folks lay near him, which after he once knew, he would diligently visit them. And when he saw any of them likely to die, he would preach to them, teaching them the way to die, with such godly persuasions, that for the most part he never departed till the sick persons were well satisfied and contented with death.

“Many times it was his chance to come to such poor houses as for want of chimneys were very smoky, and thereby so noisome that scant any man could abide in them. Nevertheless himself would there sit by the sick patient, many times the space of three or four hours together in the smoke, when none of his servants were able to abide in the house, but were fain to tarry without till his coming abroad. And in some other poor houses, where stairs were wanting, he would never disdain to climb up a ladder for such a good purpose. And when he had given them such ghostly comfort as he thought expedient for their souls, he would at his departure leave behind him his charitable alms,

giving charge to his steward and other officers daily to prepare meat convenient for them, if they were poor, and send it unto them. Besides, he gave at his gate to divers poor people, which were commonly no small number, a daily alms of money, to some twopence, to some threepence, to some fourpence, to some sixpence, and some more, after the rate of their necessity. That being done, every of them was rewarded likewise with meat, which was daily brought to the gate. And lest any fraud, partiality, or other disorder might arise in the distribution of the same, he provided himself a place whereunto immediately after dinner he would resort, and there stand to see the division with his own eyes. If any strangers came, he would entertain them at his own table, according to their vocations, with such mirth as stood with the gravity of his person, whose talk was always rather of learning or contemplation than of worldly matters.

“And when he had no strangers, his order was now and then to sit with his chaplains, which were commonly grave and learned men, among whom he would put some grave question of learning, not only to provoke them to better consideration and deep search of the hid mysteries of our religion, but also to spend the time of repast in such talk, that might be (as it was indeed) pleasant, profitable, and comfortable to the waiters and standers-by.

“And yet he was so dainty and spare of time that he would never bestow fully one hour on any meal. His diet at table was, for all such as thither resorted, plentiful and good, but for himself

very mean. For upon such eating-days as were not fasted, although he would for his health use a larger diet than at other times, yet was it with such temperance, that commonly he was wont to eat and drink by weight and measure. And the most of his sustenance was thin pottage, sodden with flesh, eating the flesh itself very sparingly. The ordinary fasts appointed by the Church he kept very roundly, and to them he joined many other particular fasts of his own devotion, as appeared well by his thin and weak body, whereupon, though much flesh was not left, yet would he punish the very bones and skin upon his back. He wore most commonly a shirt of hair, and many times he would whip himself in most secret wise.

“When night was come, which commonly brings rest to all creatures, then would he many times despatch away his servants and fall to his prayers a long space. And after he had ended the same, he laid him down upon a poor, hard couch of straw and mats, for other bed he used none. At Rochester this was in his closet near the cathedral church, where he might look into the choir and hear divine service. And being laid, he never rested above four hours at one time, but straightway rose and ended the rest of his devout prayers.

“Thus lived he, till towards his latter days, when being more grown into age, which is, as Cicero saith, a sickness of itself, he was forced somewhat to relent of those hard and severe fasts; and the rather for that his body was much weakened with a consumption. Wherefore, by counsel of his physician and

license of his ghostly father, he used upon some fasting-days to comfort himself with a little thin gruel made for the purpose.

“The care that he had of his family was not small, for although his chiefest burden consisted in discharge of his spiritual function, yet did he not neglect his temporal affairs. Wherefore he took such order in his revenues that one part was bestowed upon reparation and maintenance of the Church, the second upon the relief of poverty and maintenance of scholars, and the third upon his household expenses and buying of books, whereof he had great plenty. And lest the trouble of worldly business might be some hindrance to his spiritual exercise, he used the help of his brother Robert, a layman, whom he made his steward, as long as his said brother lived; giving him in charge so to order his expenses that by no means he brought him in debt. His servants used not to wear their apparel after any courtlike or wanton manner, but went in garments of a sad and seemly colour, some in gowns and some in coats, as the fashion then was; whom he always exhorted to frugality and thrift, and in anywise to beware of prodigality. And when he marked any of them more given to good husbandry than others, he would many times lend them money and never ask it again; and commonly when it was offered him, he did forgive it. If any of his household had committed a fault, as sometimes it happened, he would first examine the matter himself, and finding him faulty, would for the first time but punish him with word only; but it should be done with such a severity of



speech, that whosoever came once before him was very unwilling to come before him again for any such offence ; so that by this means his household continued in great quietness and peace, every man knowing what belonged to his duty.

“Some among the rest, as they could get opportunity, would apply their minds to study and learning, and those above others he specially liked, and would many times support them with his labour and sometimes with his money. But where he saw any of them given to idleness and sloth, he could by no means endure them in his house, because out of that fountain many evils are commonly wont to spring. In conclusion, his family was governed with such temperance, devotion and learning, that his palace for continency seemed a very monastery, and for learning a university.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the daily life of this holy prelate, a life only interrupted when his duties obliged him to visit Cambridge or take his place in Convocation or in Parliament. Nevertheless, he was careful to watch over his own flock with constant attention. He performed the canonical visitation of his whole diocese. He had no fear or hesitation in correcting unworthy ministers of the altar, or in enforcing residence on those who had the care of souls. In one of his sermons on the Penitential Psalms he had said, “All fear of God, also the contempt of God, cometh and is grounded by the clergy,” and on this maxim he consistently acted. “He sequestered all

<sup>1</sup> See Van Ortrov, pp. 99—106.

such as he found unworthy to occupy that high function, he placed others fitter in their room; and also such as were accused of any crime he put to their purgation, not sparing the punishment of simony and heresy, and other crimes and abuses."

The preaching of God's Word is one of the especial functions of a bishop, and was certainly one to which the holy Bishop of Rochester devoted particular care. It was a subject of sorrow to him that the regular parochial preaching was much neglected at that time. He had advised the Lady Margaret, among her other munificent works, to establish certain preacherships, the incumbents of which were to deliver a certain number of sermons annually in various places in different parts of the country, in the hope, doubtless, of reviving the desire for this heavenly food in the hearts of the faithful. Nor are proofs wanting that about this time, and probably from the example and influence of Fisher, other bishops and members of religious orders began to turn their attention to the same subjects. Some of the Blessed John Fisher's sermons were published, and are preserved to the present day. We have his sermons on the Penitential Psalms, published by command of the Lady Margaret; the funeral oration on her son, Henry VII.; her own funeral sermon, one against Luther, and others, besides a treatise on prayer. The rest of his works are for the most part controversial, *e.g.*, treatises in defence of the King's work on the Sacraments, and against Luther and his followers.

The success of these writings was such as to extend his reputation throughout Europe, and to gain for him the name of one of the most learned and holy pastors of the Church.

We have said that the Bishop never willingly quitted his own diocese, nor did he readily undertake any works but such as regarded the welfare of his own people. Nevertheless, a bright light must not be hidden, and charity or obedience may sometimes oblige those who would desire to live in silent retirement to lend their help to the public service of the Church and of their country.

Bishop Fisher was never able to visit Rome in person. He was nominated as one of a special commission which the King intended to have sent for the opening of the Lateran Council; but for some unknown reason the project was not carried out. On other occasions also he had hoped to accomplish the duty, and had made preparations for the journey, when some obstacle occurred to prevent it.

In the year when Cardinal Wolsey, in virtue of his legatine authority, called a synod of all the bishops of the country to discuss grave matters for the benefit of the Church, the Bishop of Rochester desirous of true reform attended the assembly, in order to give his support to any measure that might be proposed for the correction of abuses and the advantage of the faithful. To his bitter disappointment he discovered that no such scheme was in contemplation, and all he could do was to lament the evil of the times, and courageously, though

respectfully, to protest against the ambition and worldly pomp of so many of the dignified ecclesiastics, to which he attributed the evils which then prevailed. He was listened to with respect and apparent sympathy from his brethren, but unhappily no result followed.

One of the Bishop's chief complaints was that he found himself so liable to be called away from his own duties to attend the pageants of the Court, such as the solemn reception of ambassadors and the like.

As his residence lay on the highway between London and Dover, where foreigners generally landed, it is probable that he came in for more than a reasonable share of these burdens, and we have records of his being required to be present on various occasions of the sort. Though intended as an honour, he regarded such service as a grievous hindrance to his proper work, a loss of precious time and a squandering of resources, which he would have bestowed on the poor of Christ. Attendance at the Convocation of the clergy was a duty which the holy prelate would recognize as more proper to his office than service at the ceremonies of the Court. Yet even this involved attention to secular interests, and could not always be conscientiously discharged without opposition to those in power. The Convocation, held separately for the two ecclesiastical provinces of Canterbury and York, was an assembly of clergy, instituted for the purpose of granting subsidies from the revenues of the Church, for the support of the Crown and

the government of the State. It was not a canonical Synod, though sometimes, after the business of taxation was concluded, it was continued by the Archbishop for the settlement of ecclesiastical affairs and the sanction of disciplinary decrees.

In the year 1523, the Bishop of Rochester, together with others, who however were in a minority, felt himself constrained to oppose the demands of the Court for a very large subsidy, to be spent in the war with France, which to his mind was to squander the resources of the poor on an unprofitable object.

This however was a little matter compared with the troubles which his duties in Convocation were to bring upon him hereafter.

Thus passed the life of the future martyr, amidst the active duties of his calling and exercises of devotion, not certainly without many crosses and contradictions, but still in comparative tranquillity, till that most calamitous date of our history, when the question of the royal divorce began to be agitated.

Henry VIII., in the year of his accession to the Crown, and in accordance with the arrangement already made by his father, had espoused Catherine of Arragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and widow of his elder brother, Arthur, a sickly youth, who had died at the age of sixteen years.

The canonical impediment of *public honesty*, as it is called (which annuls a marriage, which a man

may attempt to contract with one who has been espoused to his brother), and also the impediment of affinity (in case it had been incurred), had been regularly dispensed with by Pope Julius II., at the request of Ferdinand and Henry VII., the respective fathers of Catherine and Henry.

There were some in England who disapproved of this marriage for reasons of their own, but none who questioned its validity, or denied the power of the Pontiff to remove impediments, instituted by the positive law of the Church.

Henry had lived in peace with his wife, a woman of great virtue, and more than ordinary holiness of life. They had had several children, though one only, the Princess Mary, had survived the period of early infancy.

It was therefore a grievous scandal to the whole nation when, about the beginning of 1527, it became known that the King had determined on divorcing his lawful wife and marrying another. He had the hypocrisy to plead motives of conscience, and found counsellors, who argued that his marriage was against the Levitical law, and that the Christian Church had no authority to dispense with a divine prohibition; but no one was blinded for long by this pretext, all being soon made aware that the true cause was the unholy passion which Henry entertained for Anne Boleyn, his hope of male issue by her, and his determination to raise her to the throne.

We cannot follow the miserable story in all its details, but must take it up at the date when the

Blessed John Fisher was called upon to have a part in it. The occasion of his first appearance in the cause was his answer to the letter which the King had ordered to be addressed to the most learned Bishops of the kingdom, to ask their opinion on his pretended scruple of conscience. The Bishop's answer was written in May, 1527, and was sent to Cardinal Wolsey, who forwarded it to the King.<sup>1</sup> In this he declared that, after a careful study of the case, he did not doubt "that considering the plenitude of the power which Christ has conferred on the Sovereign Pontiff, the Pope could for some very grave reason dispense for such a marriage, . . . otherwise to no purpose Christ would have said, 'Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.'"

It was of the utmost importance to the King's design to have the support of a man so venerated for learning and sanctity as was the Bishop of Rochester, and accordingly Wolsey was sent to him, and had a long interview, in which he attempted to modify the holy prelate's opinions; but the effort had to be abandoned as utterly hopeless.

<sup>1</sup> On June the 2nd. For the text of this letter, which does our martyr so much honour, see Pocock, *Records of the Reformation*, i. pp. 9, 10. Fisher confesses that authorities were divided on the question, but says that even granting that their reasons were of equal weight, he would nevertheless incline to the side of the Pope, since it was acknowledged by all that it appertained to him to interpret doubtful passages of Holy Scripture. However, he himself saw no difficulty in refuting the arguments of those who declared that such a marriage was contrary to divine law.

Time went on. Negotiations with the Pope were begun and protracted, until in October, 1528, Cardinal Campeggio, the legate, arrived in England to try the cause. As it was certain that the Queen would ask for Fisher as one of her counsel, the King thought fit to anticipate her request by nominating him, with Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, Nicolas West, Bishop of Ely, and others to that office.<sup>1</sup> During the eight months which still elapsed before the Cardinals Campeggio and Wolsey opened their court, the Bishop employed his time in again studying the whole of the case, in the light of Scripture, the sacred canons and history, and as he declared at the time of his trial, he devoted more attention to this examination of the truth than to anything else in his life. He also wrote several treatises on the question, and manifested the greatest courage in maintaining the truth, even when his colleagues were inclined to vacillate in their fear of the King.

The memorable scene in the legatine court at Blackfriars must be read in the history of the times or in a detailed life of Fisher.<sup>2</sup> Here we can only say that Campeggio, in his letter to the Pope, bears ample testimony to his boldness and honesty. The King, he said, had charged him to study the question and he had devoted two years to its investigation.

<sup>1</sup> The Queen asked that foreigners might be appointed, but the King would only grant her two Flemings and one Spaniard (Louis Vives), the others were all English. They included the Blessed martyrs, Thomas Abel, Richard Featherstone, and Edward Powell.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher intervened at the 5th Session, the 28th of July, 1529. His courageous speech made an immense impression.



Now, therefore, both for fear of procuring the damnation of his soul, and in order not to be unfaithful to his King, or to fail in doing the duty which he owed to the truth, he presented himself before their reverend lordships, to declare, to affirm, and with forcible reasons to demonstrate to them that this marriage of the King and Queen can be dissolved by no power, human or divine, and for this opinion he declared he would even lay down his life. The writer then adds, "This affair of Rochester was unexpected and unforeseen, and consequently has kept every one in wonder. What he will do we shall see, when the day comes. You already know what sort of a man he is, and may imagine what is likely to happen."<sup>1</sup>

A phrase of the Cardinal's secretary may also be added, as showing the estimation in which the Bishop was held, though he risks a prophecy, which was not fulfilled. "As this man is a man of good fame, the King can no longer persist in dissolving the marriage; for this man being adverse to it, the kingdom will not permit the Queen to suffer wrong."

The history and final issue of this celebrated cause need not to be told here. All the while it dragged on, the holy Bishop ceased not to watch the proceedings with the deepest interest, lamenting

<sup>1</sup> Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum* (Rome, 1864), p. 585. Campeggio says that Fisher added that St. John the Baptist of old thought that he could not die more gloriously than for the cause of holy marriage, which yet in that day was not so holy as it now is through the Precious Blood of Christ. He had ever the example of the Baptist before his eyes.

the infatuation of the King, and continuing to write, preach, and protest, for he apprehended but too well the calamities that were to follow.

The graver troubles of the Bishop's life were only now beginning. The King summoned a Parliament to meet in that same year, 1529, more than usual pains being taken that the members of the Commons should be nominees of the Court.

Their first measure was a petition against the clergy, which had been already prepared by the lawyers of the Crown. In the debate which followed, many complaints, true or imaginary, were uttered against the clergy, and resulted in sending to the Lords a number of bills, which were certainly encroachments on the legislative authority of the Church.

In the Upper House, the Bishop of Rochester was the chief opponent of these schismatical novelties. The Protestant chronicler, Hall, gives the following words as the substance of his speech: "My Lords, you see clearly what bills come hither from the Commons House, and all is to the destruction of the Church. For God's sake see what a realm the kingdom of Bohemia was, and when the Church went down, then fell the glory of the kingdom. Now, with the Commons is nothing but, 'Down with the Church;' and all this, meseemeth, is for lack of faith only."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever his precise words may have been, they gave great offence to the Commons, who by means

<sup>1</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of Lancaster and York*, p. 767 (Edit. 1809).

of their Speaker, Audley, addressed their complaints to the King. To satisfy them, Henry called the Bishop into his presence, and having heard his explanation was content to admonish him to be temperate in his language; on which he said, that his expression, "lack of faith," should be applied only to the history of Bohemia.<sup>1</sup>

Parliament did not meet again till 1531, and in the meantime had occurred the disgrace and death of Cardinal Wolsey. The first charge against that illustrious statesman, whose real offence was his failure in the cause of the divorce, was that he had incurred the *præmunire*, by exercising the functions of legate within the kingdom, though it was notorious that he had done so with the express sanction of the King. He had been, however, allowed to compromise this accusation by the sacrifice of the greater part of his possessions, only indeed to be prosecuted for treason almost immediately afterwards.

The King and his flatterers were not slow to perceive that this device of the *præmunire* might be made a fruitful source of revenue to the Crown. If Wolsey had incurred it, so also had the clergy and the whole nation by admitting his authority. The matter was submitted to the judges, who, by the threats and violence of Henry, were compelled to declare that such was the law of the land. A pardon was immediately granted to the laity, but

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortroty remarks that some historians have accused Fisher of a want of frankness and courage on this occasion, but for his own part he regards this reply as the excuse of a witty man who retracts nothing he has said.

a writ was issued against the clergy, the penalty of conviction being the forfeiture of all their goods and imprisonment at the pleasure of the King. The clergy, though conscious of their innocence, had not courage firmly to resist this open iniquity, which probably even in those times they might have done with success, but attempted the way of compromise, which was soon to issue in the destruction of the English Church.

Parliament met again after prorogation on January 16th, 1531, and five days later the Convocation of Canterbury did the same. The latter body met as usual in the Chapter-house of Westminster Abbey, and the great question before them was whether they could compound with the King for their alleged offence. At first they offered £40,000, but they were made to understand that they must increase their offer to two and a half times as much if they would secure their pardon. On this the vote was raised to £100,044 8s. 4d., though it was believed that to levy so large a sum they would be compelled to sell chalices and reliquaries.<sup>1</sup>

After various overtures and debates between the King's orators, or delegates, and the Convocation, it was announced that he would accept £100,000 from the Convocation of Canterbury, if they would in presenting it, acknowledge the title which he had assumed of "Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy."

<sup>1</sup> See Gairdner, *A History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 108.

It appears that the full bearing of this novel claim was by no means understood, and Fisher's early biographer expressly says that "the King had a further secret meaning than was commonly known to many, which in a few years broke out, to the confusion of the whole clergy and temporality both."

Nothing was said at this time of the Supremacy of the Roman Pontiff,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps no one then suspected the King of the enormity of arrogating to himself the functions of the Vicar of Christ; but they saw that there was some design to interfere with the liberties of the Church, perhaps with the jurisdiction of the Bishops, the assembly of synods, the right of making canons and decrees, or other matters depending on the spiritual authority.

When the proposal was discussed in Convocation (February 7—11), the Bishop of Rochester took the lead and pointed out so many evils which might follow from compliance, that on this first occasion it was entirely rejected, and the King's intention defeated.

Henry could sometimes control his fury when policy required it. His orators were sent to remonstrate with the clergy, as if they were ungrateful in refusing so reasonable an offer, proposed as a commutation for a much heavier punishment.

The King also called before himself the Bishop of Rochester, some other bishops and influential

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<sup>1</sup> Bridgett holds that the claim, even in the King's mind, was only over the English Church, and had at that time no reference to the Papal Supremacy. (pp. 203—209.)

persons,<sup>1</sup> "to whom he proposed with gentle words his request and demand, promising them on the word of a king, that if they would among them acknowledge and confess him for Supreme Head of the Church of England, he would never by virtue of that grant assume unto himself any more power, jurisdiction or authority over them than all other the kings of the realm his predecessors had done before; neither would take upon him to make or promulgate any spiritual law, or exercise any spiritual jurisdiction, nor yet by any kind of means intermeddle himself among them in altering, changing, ordering or judging of any spiritual business. 'Therefore having now made you,' said he, 'this frank promise, I do expect that you shall deal with me as frankly again, whereby agreement may the better continue between us.'"

We are not surprised to hear that these false words had their effect, and that some of the clergy began to show a disposition to yield; but the Bishop of Rochester was still unmoved, and vehemently urged the Convocation to be faithful to their trust. "If ye grant to the King's request in this matter, it seemeth to me to portend an imminent and present danger at hand; for what if he should shortly after change his mind and exercise indeed the supremacy over the Church of this realm; or what if he should die, and then his successor challenge the continuance of the same? Or what if the Crown of this realm should in time fall to an infant or a woman, that shall still continue to take the same

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortrov, p. 239.

name upon them? What shall we then do? Whom shall we sue, or when shall we have remedy?" But, unhappily, this time his counsel did not prevail. The King's orators spoke with affected moderation. They said he had no such intention as the Bishop attributed to him, "and that though the supremacy were granted to his Majesty simply and absolutely, according to his demand, yet it must needs be understood and taken that he can have no further power or authority by it than *quantum per legem Dei licet*, or as far as the law of God allows. And then if a temporal prince can have no such authority by God's law (as his lordship has there declared), what needeth the forecasting of all these doubts?"<sup>1</sup>

These mingled threats and persuasions had their effect, and when the Bishop of Rochester saw that all hope of obtaining an absolute refusal was at an end, as a last refuge from utter ruin he seized upon the expression used by the orators, and persuaded the Convocation to insert in their vote the clause *quantum per legem Dei licet*. With this reservation, which he knew virtually annulled the concession, he himself consented with a sad heart to the determination of the rest. The unhappy resolution was passed 14 February, 1531.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortoy, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, in the official report, says that the modifying clause was suggested by Warham, not Fisher. Father Bridgett has ably defended our martyr against the attack of Mr. Gladstone, who accused him of having accepted the royal supremacy. (See *Tablet*, Nov. 16 and 23, 1889.) Chapuys wrote to Charles V., February 21, 1530-31, that no one who had taken part in the affair approved of such a step as this, except perhaps a few. "Indeed, I have heard

Lamentable as was this step, it must be remembered that it was no doctrinal decree establishing the headship of the Sovereign, but a mere parenthesis, in an address of thanks to the prince. The clergy did not own to any fault in having acknowledged the authority of the Papal Legate, but asked for a discharge from all forfeitures incurred by the breach of any statute, and they offered their gift as a mark of gratitude to his Majesty for his zeal in writing against Luther and suppressing heresies, and checking insults against the clergy. Then, after speaking of the English Church, they add, "Of which we recognize his Majesty as the singular protector, the only and supreme lord, and so far as the law of Christ permits also the supreme head."

The holy Bishop on this occasion found himself in a position of great difficulty. He was obliged there and then to decide whether it would be better for him to accept the obnoxious title claimed by the King, with the clause, which rightly interpreted would nullify its perverse intent, or whether he should stand aloof and leave the Convocation to yield

many worthy individuals speak of it with horror, and have been told of others who expressed themselves in like terms. The Chancellor [More] himself is so horrified at it that he wishes to quit office as soon as possible. The Bishop of Rochester is quite ill in consequence. He has made, and is still making, as much opposition as he can to the measure." In October, 1530, Fisher had not hesitated to appeal to the Holy See against a new bill affecting ecclesiastical benefices, and had been arrested in consequence. On March 1st Chapuys writes again: "The Bishop of Rochester is unwell, and has been so ever since the acknowledgment subscribed by the clergy, which has caused him considerable sorrow and disappointment."



to the King's pleasure without any reservation, as they were prepared to do.

We know enough of the Bishop to feel sure that he would not have acted out of weakness or out of fear, or in opposition to the dictates of his conscience. Nevertheless, he might well be anxious as to the consequences likely to result from the measure, and he had soon reason to see how his own compliance would be misused to induce others to conformity. Tunstal, Bishop of Durham, and so a member of the Northern Convocation, had written to Henry to express his objections to the novel title, and was told in reply that he ought surely to conform his conscience to that of so many learned divines as sat in the Convocation of Canterbury, and amongst others the Bishop of Rochester, learned both in divinity and the canon law.

The Bishop had, however, the consolation of finding that many of the clergy in all parts of the kingdom, and many of his own diocese, joined in a protestation against any encroachments on the liberty of the Church, or any act derogatory to the authority of the Holy See.<sup>1</sup>

About this time an attempt was made to deprive the Bishop of life by means of poison; but it providentially happened that he was so ill<sup>2</sup> on that day as to be unable to take the food prepared for him,

<sup>1</sup> Friedmann's *Anne Bolcyn*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> He had lost his appetite "through overlong sitting and reading in his study that forenoon."

though several persons of his household were the victims of this iniquity.

Another day, while he was still at his house on Lambeth Marsh, a shot was fired across the river and struck the roof near the study where he usually sat. The perpetrator was not discovered; but it was ascertained that the shot came from the house of the Earl of Wiltshire, Anne Boleyn's father.<sup>1</sup>

These evident proofs of malice induced the Bishop to retire to Rochester. "Let us truss up our baggage and begone," he said, "for this is no place for us to abide in any longer." He remained in his diocese till the meeting of Parliament in October, and it was perhaps about this time that an event occurred, which shall be related as a proof of the placid and unworldly temper of his mind. His manor-house at Halling, near Rochester, was entered one night by thieves, who carried away all his plate. When the robbery was discovered in the morning by the servants, they commenced a pursuit, and pressed so closely upon the thieves, that to escape with greater facility they let fall several pieces of stolen property; these were gathered up by the servants and taken back to the house before the Bishop was even apprised of the robbery. When his lordship came down to dinner, he discovered an unusual dulness in the

<sup>1</sup> The wicked cook, who was called Richard Rose, was executed at Smithfield. Chapuys suspected the connivance of Anne Boleyn and her father. Anne feared and hated Fisher as her most formidable adversary. The second attempt against his life seems to have been hushed up. We only know of it from the early biographer. Chapuys did not know why Fisher quitted London so abruptly.

appearance of his servants, and inquired of them the cause. As they hesitated to answer, he conceived that something of a serious nature had occurred, and declaring to them that he was prepared for the worst that could happen, he required an explanation. The servants then related to him the circumstances of the robbery and of the recovery of part of the property. The Bishop immediately replied: "If that be all, we have more cause to rejoice that God hath restored to us some, than to be discontented that wicked men have taken away any, for the least favour of God Almighty is more to be esteemed than all the evil which the devil and all his wicked instruments can do unto us, is to be valued; wherefore let us sit down and be merry. Thank God, it is no worse; and look ye better to the rest."

Parliament was prorogued, 31 March, 1531, and did not assemble again till the January of the following year, when its services were soon made use of in pressing the clergy still further. The Bishop of Rochester, though he had received a significant message from Anne Boleyn, that it would be well for him to stay at home and take care of his health, considered it his duty to attend.

The Convocation, assembled at the same time, had an early proof of what was meant by the royal headship of the Church. A message from the King required them to resolve that no future constitution should be passed without his consent; that former canons should be revised by a commission appointed

by him, and that such as were found to be unobjectionable should be sanctioned by him.

The clergy were grievously perplexed at these demands, and as the Bishop of Rochester was ill and unable to attend, they sent a deputation to ask his opinion and advice. His answer has not been preserved; but as the Protestant Collier remarks, "Fisher's principles were not likely to put the clergymen upon any measures acceptable to the Court;" and Henry, hearing what they had done, sent to remonstrate with them, and said the clergy were but half his subjects. The result of the business was the "Submission of the Clergy" by their Act of 16 May, 1532, in which the Bishop had no part. As soon as he recovered from his sickness, he denounced in a sermon the iniquity which he now saw to be imminent.

From this time the downward course of events was rapid. An Act of Parliament was passed forbidding appeals to Rome in causes of marriage, wills, and the like; and the death of Archbishop Warham had made room for Cranmer, in whom the King found a ready instrument for all his wicked designs.

That the Bishop of Rochester might not be able to interfere with the proceedings of the divorce, and his pretended marriage, the King caused him to be arrested, under some idle pretext, and did not permit his release till all was completed.

From the letters of the Imperial Ambassador, we learn that at this time Bishop Fisher considered that matters had come to a crisis, and that the King's

treason to the Church, tyranny over his people, cruel injustice towards his lawful wife, and violation of the rights of his daughter, the Princess Mary, justified him in appealing to the Emperor to interfere to put a stop to this miserable state of things. Accordingly, he sent him a message to say that "he would like him to take active measures immediately," and soon afterwards repeated the same advice. What was the nature of the interposition he desired is not stated; and whatever it may have been, it was followed by no result. He stood not alone in his opinion, and at the time many noblemen and some members of the Council were sending similar messages through the same channel.<sup>1</sup>

The next important event in the life of the future martyr was the attack made upon him, through the agency of Cromwell, in the cause of the "Holy Maid of Kent." Elizabeth Barton, who was popularly so designated, was a Benedictine nun of St. Sepulchre's in Canterbury. From her early years she had been favoured, or supposed herself to be favoured with Divine visions and revelations: and whatever her enemies have said of her retractation, "the so-called confession of the nun proves exceedingly little."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chapuys writes: "The good and holy Bishop of Rochester . . . says that the arms of the Pope are weaker than lead against those who are obstinate, and that it is fitting that your Majesty should see to it, and that by so doing you will do a work as agreeable to God as by going against the Turk." (Sept. 27, 1533.) For a discussion of the holy Bishop's attitude see Bridgett, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Father Stanton, following Dom Gasquet, *Henry VIII. and English Monasteries*, vol. i. p. 134.

Père Van Ortro, however, takes a different view. "Un examen

She boldly predicted the heaviest judgments of God on the King, for his attempted divorce and other irreligious acts. She sought interviews with various learned and influential persons, of whom Archbishop Warham was one; and even went to the King and plainly told him her supposed heavenly message. She was listened to with respect, on account of her reputation as a holy nun, some implicitly believing her, while others held their judgment in suspense.

Among those whom she visited was Bishop Fisher, on her way to and from London through Rochester. Her first visit was entirely without an invitation on his part; but he received her graciously, knowing the high character she bore, and being desirous of ascertaining whether her claims ought to be accepted as coming from God or regarded as a delusion. What his opinion was, or whether he was able to come to any satisfactory judgment, we do not know; but it is apparent, from some of his own writings, that he considered the utmost caution necessary before reliance was placed on any supernatural communications, though of course he admits the possibility of such things in

attentif des documents qui la concernent prouve que l'on avait affaire à une malheureuse hystérique, souvent en proie à de violents accès de son mal. De là ses attitudes extraordinaires, ses hallucinations, ses prédictions souvent extravagantes et autres phénomènes analogues. Toutes ces crises avaient à un tel point affaibli et déséquilibré son esprit que même en temps de calme elle se prenait au sérieux. D'autres y furent trompés: qu'y a-t-il là de si étrange? Mais elle et ses adhérents ont-ils été fourbes et traîtres? Je ne le crois pas: et certes rien ne le prouve." (p. 247, note.)

the Church. He afterwards wrote to Henry, declaring that when the nun said that, "if his Grace went forward with the purpose he intended, he should not be King of England seven months after," the words never struck him as having a treasonable intention, and that even if they had occurred to him as capable of such a meaning he should not have thought it his duty to report them, inasmuch as he knew that she had already made the same declaration to his Majesty in person.

Towards the end of the year 1533, Elizabeth Barton and her accomplices were condemned to be guilty of high treason, and suffered accordingly. Others, amongst whom was Fisher, as well as Blessed Thomas Abel, another of our martyrs, were accused of misprision of treason for not reporting what they knew of her criminal designs; but instead of a trial by law, it was resolved that they should be condemned by an Act of Attainder, to be passed in Parliament.

While these proceedings were going forward, the Bishop was confined to bed by serious illness. He was unable to appear in the House of Lords, or to defend himself, except by writing to the King and the Secretary Cromwell. His letters are preserved, and nothing can be more complete than his exculpation of himself. Nevertheless, his condemnation was resolved on by those in power, and he was condemned by an Act which received the Royal Assent 30 March, 1534. The penalty was that the Bishop of Rochester should suffer imprisonment of his body at the King's pleasure, and forfeit to the King's

highness all his goods, chattels and debts, &c. The sentence was not carried out,<sup>1</sup> the probable reason being that another recent Act had provided a more effectual instrument of vengeance.

The Act of Succession, which passed through Parliament just at this time, was the means employed for a more general persecution than any yet devised. The object of the measure was to exclude the Princess Mary from her right of succession to the Crown by affirming the validity of the King's divorce pronounced by Cranmer, the recognition of the marriage with Anne, and the settlement of the Crown on her issue.

It was enacted that an oath to this effect should be proposed to the nobility, both spiritual and temporal, and other subjects, at the King's pleasure, and the penalty for refusal was to be that of misprision of treason.

The terms of the oath were not a part of the Act; and, in fact, it was offered under different forms to different persons, but was always so worded as to comprise an acknowledgment of the King's supremacy, and in some cases an explicit renunciation of the Pope's jurisdiction.

The Bishop of Rochester had celebrated the Easter festival for the last time in his own diocese on the 5th of April, and though scarcely fit to travel,

<sup>1</sup> Fisher's early biographer tells us that he had to purchase his pardon at the price of £300, being one whole year's revenues of his bishopric.



now prepared to obey the order he had received to appear before the Royal Commissioners at Lambeth. We can give no better account of what followed, or represent more truly the pious disposition of the great prelate, than by citing the words of his biographer.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's "letter being once known and heard of in his house, cast such a terror and fear among his servants, and after among his friends abroad in the country, that nothing was there to be heard but lamentation and mourning on all sides. Howbeit, the holy man, nothing at all dismayed therewith (as a thing that he daily and hourly looked for before) called all his family before him, and willed them to be of good cheer and to take no care for him, saying that he nothing doubted but all this should be to the glory of God and his own quietness." He then gave instructions to his steward, for the benefit of his household, the poor of Rochester, and a bequest to Michael House at Cambridge; and "the next day he set forward on his journey to Lambeth, and passing through Rochester there were by that time assembled a great number of people of that city and country about to see him depart, to whom he gave his blessing on all sides as he rode through the city bareheaded. Then might you have heard great wailing and lamenting, some crying that they would never see him again. Some others said, 'Woe worth them that are the cause of his trouble;' others cried out upon the wickedness of the time

to see such a sight, everyone uttering his grief to others as their minds served them.

“Thus passed he till he came to a place in the way called Shooter’s Hill, nigh twenty miles from Rochester, on the top whereof he rested himself and descended from his horse; and because the hour of his refection was then come (which he observed at due times) he caused to be set before him such victuals as were thither brought for him of purpose, his servants standing round about him. And so he came to London that night.”<sup>1</sup>

On Monday, the 13th of April, the holy Bishop appeared before the Commissioners at Lambeth, and when the oath was proposed to him he asked leave to see and consider it, and to enable him to do so, was remanded for a few days to his own house at Lambeth Marsh.

When there he was allowed to receive visits, and amongst them a deputation from St. John’s College, asking him for a final confirmation of their Statutes, which he declined to give until he had once more carefully examined them. To continue the narrative: “The day being at last come when this blessed man should give answer before the Commission whether he would accept the oath or no, he presented himself again unto them, saying that he had perused the same oath with as good deliberation as he could, but being framed in such sort as it is, by no means he could accept it with safety of his conscience. ‘Nevertheless,’ said he, ‘to satisfy

<sup>1</sup> See Van Ortrov, pp. 276—278.

the King's Majesty's will and pleasure, I am content to swear to some part thereof, so that myself may frame it with other conditions and in other sort than it now standeth, and so both mine own conscience shall be thereby satisfied, and his Majesty's doings the better justified and warranted by law.' But to that they answered that the King would by no means like of any kind of exceptions or conditions, 'and therefore,' said my Lord of Canterbury, 'you must answer directly to our question, whether you will swear the oath or no.' 'Then,' said my Lord of Rochester, 'if you will needs have me answer directly, my answer is, that forasmuch as mine own conscience cannot be satisfied, I do absolutely refuse the oath.' Upon which answer he was sent straight away to the Tower of London."<sup>1</sup>

We do not know the precise points of the oath which Blessed John Fisher required to be altered before he would accept it.<sup>2</sup> However, some months

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortroty, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Cranmer, writing to Cromwell, 17 April, 1534, says: "My Lord of Rochester and Master More were contented to be sworn to the Act of the King's succession, but not to the preamble of the same. What was the cause of their refusal thereof I am uncertain, and they would by no means express the same. Nevertheless, it must needs be either the diminution of the authority of the Bishop of Rome, or else the reprobation of the King's first pretended matrimony." Fisher always adhered to the same line, at once prudent and conciliatory. After the 1st of May he was several times required to take the oath, but always steadily refused. His reply was always the same. He was willing to recognize the right of King and Parliament to change the succession to the throne for grave reasons, but this was the limit of his concessions. (See Van Ortroty, p. 284, note.)

later the Bishop himself wrote to Cromwell:<sup>1</sup> "I was content to be sworn to that parcel concerning the succession, and I did return this reason, which I said moved me. I doubted not but that the prince of any realm, with the consent of his nobles and commons, might appoint for his succession royal such an order as was seen to his wisdom to be most according. . . . Albeit I refused to swear some other parcels, because that my conscience would not serve me so to do."

Cranmer also, almost immediately after their appearance before the Commission, had written to the same Secretary to recommend that Fisher and More should be allowed to swear to the succession simply, without reference to other points, as their example would have the greatest effect in tranquillizing the people and promoting the general acceptance of the measure.

This insidious proposal, however, was rejected. Speaking of the case of his father-in-law, More, Roper says that the King was disposed to follow this counsel, but that Anne Boleyn by her importunate clamour did so exasperate him, that he changed his purpose and persisted in requiring the entire oath without omission or modification of any sort. If this was true in the case of More, there can be little doubt that it was the same with Fisher, who of the two was probably the more odious to her.

It was on 21 April, 1534, that the holy Bishop was sent to the Tower, which was to be his prison

<sup>1</sup> Bruce, *Archæologia*, vol. xxv. p. 93.

for the next fourteen months, and which he was never to quit till, on the festival of St. Alban, the first martyr of this land, he was led to Tower Hill to receive the crown of his own good confession.

The chamber assigned to him was an upper floor of the Bell Tower, the entrance to which was through the Lieutenant's lodgings. It was perhaps the best prison in the whole fortress, but, nevertheless, a cold and miserable abode for an aged man already broken down with ill-health. Cardinal Pole, who was well acquainted with his state, considered it a marvellous thing that he had survived so long; for when the Cardinal left England some time before he had judged it impossible that the old man should survive for more than a year, even though he had lived in his own house and taken every precaution.

The hardships to which he was exposed as winter advanced became so extreme, that on the 22nd of December he was constrained to write to Cromwell to obtain for him some mitigation. He says: "I have neither shirt nor suit, nor yet the clothes that are necessary for me to wear, but that are ragged and rent too shamefully. Notwithstanding, I might easily suffer that if they would keep my body warm. But as to my diet also, God knoweth how slender it is at many times, and now in mine age my stomach may not away but with a few kind of meats, which if I want, I decay forthwith and fall into coughs and diseases of my body, and cannot keep myself in health. And as our Lord knoweth, I have nothing left unto me to provide any better, but as my

brother of his own purse layeth out for me to his own great hindrance." He then asks the Secretary to petition the King for his release, and adds two other requests, the one that he might have a priest to hear his confession before the Christmas solemnities, and the other that he might be allowed to borrow some books "to stir up his devotion more effectually these holy days for the comfort of his soul."<sup>1</sup>

From this it is evident that the sufferings even of the Bell Tower were cruel indeed for a sick and aged man, whose property was confiscated, and to whom nothing was left to provide himself with bare necessities; but it appears to be a mistake to suppose that he was at one time removed to a still more wretched cell. In one of the vaults of the White Tower there is an inscription indicating that some one was shut up there, because a set of sacred vestments had been found in his prison cell. But the obscure signature, though sometimes read "R. Fisher," is probably "R. Ithell." At all events it cannot refer to the Bishop of Rochester, who signed himself "Jo. Roffs.," and of whom no such incident is recorded.

According to the custom of the prisons in those days, everything supplied to the Bishop was charged at an enormous price, to the profit of the wardens of the gaol, who were allowed to enrich themselves with this recognized plunder.

<sup>1</sup> Bridgett, *Blessed John Fisher*, p. 292. "Truly," wrote the Bishop of Coventry to Cromwell, "the man is nigh gone and cannot long continue unless the King and Council are merciful to him, for the body cannot bear the cloth on the back." (*Letters*, &c. vii. n. 498.)

Bishop Fisher, however, found a good friend during at least part of his imprisonment, in the Italian merchant Antonio Bonvisi, well known for his charity to the confessors of the faith, who, for a considerable time, supplied both him and his fellow-captive, the Blessed Thomas More, with necessary maintenance. During this interval the venerable man had another severe illness, and it seems was visited by a physician<sup>1</sup> sent by the King, and, wonderful to relate, once more recovered a certain degree of health. As nothing is said about religious ministration of any kind we must infer that the holy Bishop was precluded from even assisting at Mass, though there were two churches within the precincts. During the first part of his captivity the Bishop was allowed the use of pen and paper, and completed several treatises. The first was entitled *A Spiritual Consolation*, and was addressed to his sister Elizabeth, a Dominican nun at Dartford, in Kent. Another work followed on *The Ways to Perfect Religion*, also written for her use. He also composed, in Latin, his treatise on the *Necessity of Prayer: its Fruits and Method*, a precious memorial of his piety, which seems to have been the last work he composed.

When Henry first induced Convocation to address him by the title of Supreme Head of the English Church, no mention whatever was made of

<sup>1</sup> His name was Friar. We have his letter (dated 16 August, 1535) asking for payment "for xii days labour and iiij nights watching" by the sick Bishop's bedside. (Ellis, *Original Letters*, third series, vol. ii. pp. 346, 347.)

the Pope, and the clergy were told that it was not the King's intention to create any authority beyond that which his predecessors had enjoyed.

Nevertheless, there is reason to suppose that he and his Council had ulterior plans, and were looking forward to a time when a convenient pretext might be found for breaking off from the unity of the Catholic Church. The occasion occurred three years later, when on the 23rd of March, 1534, Pope Clement VII. finally pronounced on the validity of the marriage of Henry and Catherine, and consequently on the nullity of the divorce as decreed by Cranmer.

No time was lost in taking vengeance. In April commissioners were appointed by the King to exact the unlawful oath from all monks and friars. It is a sad truth that comparatively few had the courage to resist. They had the noble example of the Carthusians, of the Observant Franciscans in great numbers, and of a few other individuals; but the vast majority fell away in the day of trial, though, as one of the commissioners wrote, "Some swore with an evil will and slenderly took." Simultaneously with this measure the bishops and others received orders to keep up a continual preaching against the Pope, declaring his jurisdiction an abuse, and that he had no more authority in England than any foreign bishop. All this was carried out with the most outrageous insolence on the part of many preachers, insomuch that it was said that the heretics in Germany had never indulged in such excesses.



Nevertheless at this date, according to the Ambassador Chapuys, "The English people, knowing as they do that all this proceeds from passion, malice, and revenge, do not attach much faith to it, but are, on the contrary, very angry with the King for doing so."

These were sad tidings to reach the holy prelate in his prison. His own College of St. John, soon after his arrest, had sent a deputation to express their sympathy and attachment; but before long he was to hear that they too had yielded to the pressure and had been caught in the snare.

The King tried vainly to induce the Bishop to comply with his unholy claims. He sent to him some prelates who had already yielded—Gardiner of Winchester, Tunstal of Durham, and Stokesley of London—who happily lived to repent of their prevarication and give proof of their sincerity by their sufferings in the following reign. The blessed servant of God not only rejected their persuasions, but very sincerely reprovèd them for their sinful infidelity to the Church of which they were the pastors. His own faithful servant, in the simplicity of his affection, next tried to persuade him to do as the other bishops had done, and in his own mind to think as he pleased. "Tush, tush," was his answer; "thou art but a fool, and knowest little what this matter meaneth; but hereafter thou may'st know more. . . . But, God being my good Lord, I will never agree to any of them both [*i.e.*, the oath of Succession or Supremacy], and thus thou may'st say another day thou heard'st

me speak, when I am dead and gone out of this world.”<sup>1</sup>

These attempts to win him over to the King's side having failed, the next thing devised by his enemies was to entrap him into an implicit denial of the King's new title, after the Act (26 Henry VIII. c. 13) making it high treason to do so came into operation, which was not until the 1st of February, 1535. When the Bishop was told of it about Candlemas, he blessed himself, and said, “Is it so?” They had no legal right to force him to a declaration, and there was no obligation of conscience to require him to volunteer to do so. His faith was already well known to the world, and was expressed in various writings of his; and it was a part of Christian prudence to avoid giving his adversaries any advantage, and allowing their iniquity to assume the appearance of law.

Meanwhile the martyrdom of the first band of the holy Carthusians, with the Blessed Richard Reynolds and Blessed John Haile, took place at Tyburn. When the Bishop heard of their sentence he said, “I pray God that no vanity subvert them.” When he was shown some scrap of paper found in their cells, on which they had written, he said, “They be gone; God have mercy on their souls.” But he said not a word which the jailor's servant might report against him.

But three days after the martyrdom of the Carthusian Priors the Bishop received a visit from Cromwell and other members of the Council, whose

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortrov, p. 308.

object was to lead him to commit himself to some statement which might be ground for the charge of high treason. Cromwell read to him a copy of the Act of Supremacy, to which the martyr calmly replied that he could not take the King to be Supreme Head of the Church. Cromwell then read him another Act making it treason to deny the Supremacy, but, as we have seen, the holy Bishop was already aware of its contents. It appears, however, that this was the occasion that decided the martyr's fate. It was the 7th of May, 1535. Not many days afterwards they came again, to submit him to an examination; but on this occasion, the Bishop remarked to his servant that they went as they came, that is, without obtaining their object. But as a matter of fact they had already obtained it.

It was after this visit that Fisher was told by the lieutenant's servant, that these lords had also been with his fellow-prisoner, the Blessed Thomas More, and this induced him to attempt a correspondence with More through this same servant. A letter, however, was intercepted and a vigorous inquiry instituted among the servants, and the principals were themselves examined. From this it appeared that during the course of their confinement a few letters and notes had passed between them, chiefly as to the course they had taken when the oath was proposed to them at Lambeth.

It was at one of these examinations that, according to the early biographer, some member of the Council had recourse to a most shameless and atrocious falsehood, practised both upon Fisher and

More, to induce them to yield to the King's pleasure. Fisher was told that More had consented to what was required, and was shortly to be restored to his honours; and the counterpart of the story was then repeated to More, leaving the two confessors in the utmost perplexity, unable to believe so lamentable a fall, and yet not knowing how to discredit the solemn assertion of a lord of the Council.<sup>1</sup>

On the 20th of May, 1535, the newly-elected Pope, Paul III., created a number of Cardinals, among whom John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was made Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, the titular church assigned to him being that of St. Vitalis. The Pontiff, no doubt, was moved to do this by the universal esteem in which the prelate was held for his great learning and acknowledged sanctity; and he appears not to have foreseen the effect which the step would produce on such a man as Henry. On the contrary, it is thought by some writers, that the Pontiff hoped that it would be regarded as a conciliatory measure.

Others, however, had a different opinion. The Imperial Ambassador in Rome wrote to the Emperor that he thought before the Bishop heard of his elevation, our Lord would have given him the true red hat, the crown of martyrdom; and when the news of the glorious passion of the Carthusians

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortrov considers that this story is based on a false interpretation of a passage in a letter of Margaret Roper to Alice Alington (August, 1534), recounting a conversation she had had with her father in prison about Bishop Fisher. (p. 302, note.) There are, however, no sure grounds for rejecting it.

reached the Holy City, it became the impression that Henry would be daring enough to vent his rage even on a Cardinal, and that the jealousies of the sovereigns would prevent any interference on their part.

The news of the promotion reached England before the end of May. The Bishop's own testimony is, that he heard the lieutenant's servant George report from Mistress Roper "after the last sitting of the Council here, . . . that this respondent was made a Cardinal. And then this respondent said in the presence of the same George and Wilson, if the Cardinal's hat were laid at his feet he would not stoop to pick it up, he did set so little by it." These were the sentiments of his personal humility and contempt of honours; but at the same time he held the dignities of the Church in due reverence, and was sensible of the duties connected with them. Fisher's biographer tells us that the King sent Cromwell to the Bishop, and that the following dialogue took place between them:

"My Lord of Rochester," said the Secretary, "if the Pope should now send you a Cardinal's hat, what would you do?—would you take it?"

"Sir," said he, "I know myself so far unworthy of any such dignity, that I think of nothing less than such matters; but if he do send it me, assure yourself I will work with it by all the means I can to benefit the Church of Christ, and in that respect I will receive it on my knees."

The King's rage was now uncontrollable. When

he heard of this answer of the servant of God, he said to Cromwell: "Yea, is he yet so lusty? Well, let the Pope send him a hat when he will; but I will so provide that whensoever it cometh he shall wear it on his shoulders, for head shall he have none to set it on."

The Council was again ordered to summon the two confessors in the Tower, with the determination that, if they did not submit, they should be executed before St. John's Day. As nothing could be gained from them, and the sentiment of the people was greatly in their favour, preachers were ordered to vilify them from the pulpit, and to denounce the Holy See.

Although the Bishop's death had been determined on before his elevation to the Cardinalate, there can be little doubt that this event accelerated his execution. A special commission was issued on the 1st of June to Sir Thomas Audley, the Lord Chancellor, with several noblemen and lawyers, for the trial of Fisher and More; but being again prostrated by sickness the Cardinal could not be brought before them till the 17th of that month. On that day, though still so feeble that on the way he seemed at the very point of death, he was conducted partly by land and partly by the river to Westminster Hall, accompanied by a number of halberdiers and men-at-arms, with the axe of the Tower carried before him, according to custom, the blade being turned from him.

The original indictment has been preserved, and

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has lately been brought to light.<sup>1</sup> It is of considerable length; but the substance of the charge is, "that maliciously, traitorously and falsely he had said these words: 'The King, our sovereign lord, is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England,' and that these words were spoken before several persons in the Tower of London on the 7th of May."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> App. to Third Report of Dep. Keeper, &c, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> It is very important to note that this was the *real* and only charge brought against him, because after his death the English ambassadors at foreign Courts were ordered to spread the rumour that he and More had been executed for planning an insurrection against the King. There was not a word of this in the indictment. The crucial passage ran as follows: *Quidam tamen Johannes Fysshier nuper de civitate Roffensi in comitatu Kanc. clericus, alias dictus Johannes Fysshier nuper de Roffensi episcopus . . . septimo die Maii anno regni ejusdem Domini Regis vicesimo septimo apud Turrim Londonensem in comitatu Middlesex contra legantiz suæ debitum hæc verba Anglicana sequentia diversis dicti Domini Regis veris subditis, false, malitiose et proditorie loquebatur et propalabat, videlicet: "The Kinge owre Sovereign Lord is not supreme hedd yn erthe of the Cherche of Englande."* (See *Archæologia*, vol. xxv. pp. 94, 95; ap. Van Ortrooy, pp. 319, 320.) The story told by Fisher's early biographer, after Rastall, of the royal trickery by which a secret messenger became the Bishop's accuser may have been suggested by a similar incident in the life of More. It has no authority in the strictly contemporary records. Père Van Ortrooy is inclined to reject the whole story, though he admits Father Bridgett (chapter xvii. *passim*) has shown that it is by no means lacking in probability. Dr. Ortiz, writing to the Empress (20 July, 1535) on the authority of Chapuys makes no mention of it. His account is thus resumed by Mr. Gairdner: "On the 17th the Cardinal of Rochester was sentenced. He was told that he did not appear to dispute but to hear his sentence of death for transgressing *maliciously* the statutes of the kingdom, by which the King was Supreme Head of the English Church. He replied that he had not contradicted those statutes *maliciously*, but with the truth and holy intention, as they were opposed to the Scriptures and to our Faith. He was then

Fisher had been declared to be deprived of his bishopric, and his clerical privileges were ignored. He was, therefore, tried before a jury brought together in the usual manner, without any ceremony of degradation, a thing much thought of in those times.

His biographer has given us an account of the trial at considerable length. He tells us that the Bishop was greatly surprised to hear the evidence, and protested that it could not be accepted by

sentenced to the same death as the Carthusians." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 1075.)

It will be observed that the indictment fixed the 7th of May as the date of the commission of the Blessed Martyr's offence. That was the day on which Fisher had been first examined in the Tower by a deputation of the Privy Council. It seems clear from the evidence of Wilson, Fisher's servant, that on that occasion he replied that "*he could not consent to take the King as Supreme Head.*" It is true he forgot that he had said this later on, but Wilson reminded him of the fact. The holy Bishop had no fear, however, of having transgressed the statute, because of the word *maliciously* which had been expressly put in to safeguard the rights of private speech. But later on, after his correspondence with Blessed Thomas More, he felt more doubtful as to the security of this position, and so at future interrogations he entrenched himself in a prudent silence. But the indictment shows that his answer to the Privy Councillors was considered sufficient to condemn him. There was thus no necessity for the alleged abominable treachery of the King. It is true Rich played a similar part in the case of Sir Thomas More, but in this case there is abundant external evidence of the truth of the story, whereas here there is none. The procedure of the Privy Council, on the 7th of May, was however sufficiently disgraceful. First they read to the confessor the statute which conferred on the King the title of Supreme Head: and then, not till after his categorical refusal to acknowledge the King's rights to such a title, did they read the second statute, which made it high treason to refuse. No wonder the Bishop protested that he had done nothing *maliciously*!



the court. The judges, however, replied that without regarding the means by which the evidence had been obtained, it was enough for them that the witness had solemnly deposed to the fact.

“The good Father, perceiving the small account made of his words, and the favourable credit given to his accuser might then easily smell which way the matter would go ; wherefore, directing his speeches to the lords his judges, he said : ‘ Yet I pray you, my lords, consider that by all equity, justice, worldly honesty and courteous dealing, I cannot (as the case standeth) be directly charged therewith as with treason, though I had spoken the words indeed, the same not being spoken *maliciously*, but in the way of advice and counsel, when it was requested of me by the King himself. And that favour the very words of the statute do give me, being made only against such as shall *maliciously* gainsay the King’s supremacy, and none other.’ To that it was answered by some of the judges that the word *maliciously* in the statute is but a superfluous and void word ; for if a man speak against the King’s supremacy by any manner of means, that speaking is to be understood and taken in law as *malicious*. ‘ My lords,’ said he, ‘ if the law be so understood, then is it a hard exposition, and (as I take it) contrary to the meaning of them that made the law.’

“The jury having heard all this simple evidence departed, according to the order, into a secret place, there to agree upon the verdict. But before they

went from the place the case was so aggravated to them by my Lord Chancellor, making it so heinous and dangerous a treason, that they easily perceived what verdict they must return, or else heap such danger upon their own heads as was for none of their eases to bear.

“Some other of the commissioners charged this most reverend Cardinal with obstinacy and singularity in maintaining an opinion, contrary to the determination of Parliament, as accepted by all the other bishops. To this he answered that he was only following the judgment of the Church in all times, which he must needs consider the surer course, and spoke in terms so touching that many of his hearers and some even of the judges were moved to tears, and lamented that ‘so famous and reverend a man should be in danger to be condemned to a cruel death by such an impious law, upon so weak evidence given by such a wicked accuser, contrary to all faith and promise of the King himself.’

“But all pity, mercy and right being set aside, rigour, cruelty and malice took their place. The twelve men being shortly returned from their consultation, verdict was given that he was guilty of the treason. Which although they thus did upon the menacing and threatening words of the commissioners and the King’s learned counsel, yet was it no doubt full sore against their conscience (as some of them would after report to their dying days), only for safety of their goods and lives, which they were well assured to lose in case they had acquitted him.

“After the verdict thus given by the twelve men, the Lord Chancellor commanding silence to be kept, said unto the prisoner in this sort: ‘My Lord of Rochester, you have been here arraigned of high treason, and putting yourself to the trial of twelve men, you have pleaded *Not guilty*, and they notwithstanding have found you *Guilty* in their consciences; wherefore if you have any more to say for yourself, you are now to be heard, or else to receive judgment according to the order and course of the law.’ Then said this blessed Father again: ‘Truly, my lord, if that which I have before spoken be not sufficient, I have no more to say, but only to desire Almighty God to forgive them that have thus condemned me; for I think they know not what they have done.’ Then my Lord Chancellor, framing himself to a solemnity in countenance, pronounced sentence of death upon him in the manner and form following: ‘You shall be led to the place from whence you came, and from thence shall be drawn through the City to the place of execution at Tyborne, where your body shall be hanged by the neck, and being half alive you shall be cut down and thrown to the ground, your bowels to be taken out of your body and burnt before you being alive, your head to be smitten off and your body to be divided into four quarters; and after, your head and quarters to be set up where the King shall appoint; and God have mercy on your soul.’

“After the pronouncing of this horrible and cruel sentence of death, the lieutenant of the Tower with his band of men stood ready to receive and carry



him back again to his prison. But before his departure, he desired audience of the commissioners for a few words, which being granted, he said thus in effect: 'My lords, I am here condemned before you of high treason, for denial of the King's supremacy over the Church of England; but by what order of justice I leave to God, who is searcher both of the King's Majesty's conscience and yours. Nevertheless, being found guilty, as it is termed, I am and must be contented with all that God shall send, to whose will I wholly refer and submit myself. And now, to tell you more plainly my mind, touching this matter of the King's supremacy: I think indeed, and always have thought, and do now lastly affirm, that his Grace cannot justly claim any such supremacy over the Church of God as he now taketh upon him, neither hath it ever been seen or heard of that any temporal prince before his days hath presumed to that dignity. Wherefore, if the King will now adventure himself in proceeding in this strange and unwonted case, no doubt but he shall deeply incur the displeasure of Almighty God, to the great danger of his own soul and of many others, and to the utter ruin of this realm committed to his charge, whereof will ensue some sharp punishment at His hand. Wherefore I pray God, his Grace may remember himself in time, and hearken to good counsel for the preservation of himself and his realm and the quietness of all Christendom.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rastall omits this speech, which Van Ortrooy (p. 333, note) thinks may have been composed by the biographer according to the style of the day.

"Which words being ended he was conveyed back again to the Tower of London, part on foot and part on horseback, with a like number of men bearing halberts and other weapons about him, as was before at his coming to the arraignment. And when he was come to the Tower gate, he turned him back to all his train that had thus conducted him forwards and backwards, and said unto them: 'My masters, I thank you all for all the great labour and pains ye have taken with me this day; I am not able to give you anything in recompense, for I have nothing left, and therefore I pray you accept in good part my hearty thanks.' And this he spoke with so lusty a courage, so amiable a countenance, and with so fresh and lively a colour, as he seemed rather to have come from a great feast or banquet than from his arraignment, showing by all his gesture and outward countenance such joy and gladness, as it was easy to perceive how earnestly he desired in his heart to be in that blessed state for which he had so long laboured, whereof he made the surer account, for that he was innocently condemned for Christ's cause."<sup>1</sup>

Some years after this memorable trial, Cardinal Pole, in a letter to Francis de Navarra, Bishop of Badajoz,<sup>2</sup> writing about the different lines of defence

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ortiz adds: "On his return to the Tower he was followed by a crowd of men and women in great grief, who demanded his blessing when he crossed the water to enter the Tower." (Van Ortoy, p. 334, note; cf. *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 1075.)

<sup>2</sup> Bridgett, p. 385

adopted by Fisher and More, remarks as follows: "The more I consider the result of these trials, the cause and persons who were tried, and the malice of their enemies, the more I am convinced that these two men, as in the matter itself they were taught and confirmed by God, so also in their mode of defending themselves, they were guided by Divine rather than human prudence, and I have no doubt you will come to the same conclusion if you will consider the matter more attentively."

Now at length the end of this long life of faithful service in his Master's work was close at hand. The many years of patient labour and the latter period of combat in God's cause had been passed with blameless fidelity; and the most glorious of rewards was now awaiting the good and faithful servant. The blessed man must have foreseen that martyrdom would be the end of his course on earth. He well knew the tyrannical and uncontrollable temper of the King—that he would never pardon opposition to his will; and that, even if by an exception he should in his case be inclined to a milder course, there was at his side a wicked woman who would never suffer better counsels to prevail.

When pleading against the divorce, the Bishop of Rochester had declared that it was a cause for which a man might worthily lay down his life; and since that time matters had been greatly aggravated and new causes of displeasure had occurred. Every step which the Bishop had been compelled by conscience to take was a new offence to the King, and

added weight to the vengeance which was at last to fall on his head.

Four days elapsed between the condemnation in Westminster Hall, on Thursday, the 17th of June, and the martyrdom at Tower Hill, on Tuesday the 22nd, the festival of the glorious St. Alban, the first martyr of this land. It would be vain to attempt to tell the story of those days in other words than those of his faithful biographer.

“ Being after his condemnation the space of four days in his prison, he occupied himself in continual prayer most fervently; and although he looked daily for death, yet could ye not have perceived him one whit dismayed or disquieted thereat, neither in word nor countenance, but still continued his former trade of constancy and patience, and that rather with a more joyful cheer and free mind than ever he had done before, which appeared well by this chance, that I will tell you. There happened a false rumour to rise suddenly among the people, that he should be brought to his execution by a certain day. Whereupon his cook, that was wont to dress his dinner and carry it daily unto him, hearing among others of his execution, dressed him no dinner at all that day. Wherefore, at the cook's next return unto him, he demanded the cause why he brought him not his dinner as he was wont to do. ‘ Sir,’ said the cook, ‘ it was commonly talked all the town over that you should have died that day, and therefore I thought it but in vain to dress anything for you.’ ‘ Well,’ said he merrily unto him again, ‘ for all that report thou

seest me yet alive, and therefore whatsoever news thou shalt hear of me hereafter, let me no more lack my dinner, but make it ready as thou art wont to do, and if thou see me dead, when thou comest, then eat it thyself. But I promise thee, if I be alive, I mind, by God's grace, to eat never a bit the less.'

"Thus while this blessed Bishop and most reverend Cardinal lay daily expecting the hour of his death, the King (who no less desired his death than himself looked for it) caused at last a writ of execution to be made and brought to Sir Edmund Walsingham, lieutenant of the Tower. But, where by his judgment at Westminster he was condemned (as ye have heard before) to drawing, hanging and quartering, as traitors always be, yet was he spared from that cruel execution, not for any pity or clemency meant on the King's part towards him, but the only cause thereof (as I have credibly heard) was for that, if he should have been laid upon a hurdle and drawn to Tyburn, being the ordinary place for that purpose, and distant above two miles from the Tower, it was not unlikely but he would have been dead long ere he had come there, seeing he was a man of great age, and beside that very sickly and weakly of body through his long imprisonment, wherefore order was taken that he should be led no further than the Tower Hill, and there to have his head struck off.

"After the lieutenant had received this bloody writ, he called unto him certain persons whose service and presence was to be used in that business, commanding them to be ready against the next day



in the morning. And because it was then very late in the night, and the prisoner asleep, he was loath to dis-ease him from his rest for that time; and so in the morning, before five of the clock, he came to him in his chamber in the Bell Tower, finding him yet asleep in his bed, and awaked him, showing him he was come to him on a message from the King. And after some circumstances used, with persuasion, that he should remember himself to be an old man, and that for age he could not by the course of nature live long, he told him at last that he was come to signify to him that the King's pleasure was that he should suffer death that forenoon. 'Well,' quoth this blessed Father, 'if this be your errand, you bring me no great news, for I have long time looked for this message. And I most humbly thank the King's Majesty that it pleaseth him to rid me from all this worldly business, and I thank you also for your tidings. But I pray you, Mr. Lieutenant, when is mine hour that I must go hence?' 'Your hour,' said the lieutenant, 'must be nine of the clock.' 'And what hour is it now?' said he. 'It is now about five,' said the lieutenant. 'Well, then,' said he, 'let me, by your patience, sleep an hour or two, for I have slept very little this night; and yet, to tell you the truth, not for any fear of death, I thank God, but by reason of my great infirmity and weakness.' 'The King's further pleasure is,' said the lieutenant, 'that you should use as little speech as may be, specially of anything touching his Majesty, whereby the people should have any cause to think of him or his proceedings otherwise than well.'

‘For that,’ said he, ‘you shall see me so order myself, as by God’s grace, neither the King nor any man else shall have occasion to mislike of my words.’ With which answer the lieutenant departed from him, and so the prisoner, falling again to rest, slept soundly two hours and more. And after he was waked he called his man to help him up. But first of all he commanded him to take away the shirt of hair (which accustomedly he wore on his back), and to convey it privily out of the house, and instead thereof to lay him forth a clean white shirt and all the best apparel he had, as cleanly brushed as might be. And as he was arraying himself, his man perceiving in him a more curiosity and care for the fine and cleanly wearing of his apparel that day than ever was wont to be before, demanded of him what this sudden change meant, saying that his lordship knew well enough he must put off all again within two hours and lose it. ‘What of that?’ said he, “dost thou not mark that this is our wedding-day, and that it behoveth us therefore to use more cleanliness for solemnity of the marriage?”

“About nine of the clock the lieutenant came again to his prison, and finding him almost ready said that he was now come for him. ‘I will wait upon you straight,’ said he, ‘as fast as this thin body of mine will give me leave.’ Then said he to his man, ‘Reach me my furred tippet to put about my neck.’ ‘Oh, my lord,’ quoth the lieutenant, ‘what need you be so careful for your health for this little time, being, as your lordship knoweth, not much above an hour.’ ‘I think no otherwise,’ said

this blessed Father, 'but yet in the meantime I will keep myself as well as I can, till the very time of my execution, for I tell you the truth, though I have, I thank our Lord, a very good desire and willing mind to die at this present, and so trust that of His infinite mercy and goodness He will continue it, yet will I not willingly hinder my health in the meantime one minute of an hour, but still prolong the same, as long as I can, by such reasonable ways and means as Almighty God hath provided for me.'

"And with that taking a little book in his hand, which was a New Testament lying by him, he made a cross on his forehead, and went out of his prison door with the lieutenant, being so weak, that he was scant able to go down the stairs. Wherefore at the stairs-foot he was taken up in a chair between two of the lieutenant's men, and carried to the Tower gate, with a great number of weapons about him, to be delivered to the sheriffs of London for execution. And as they were come to the uttermost precinct or liberty of the Tower, they rested there with him a space, till such time as one was sent before, to know in what readiness the sheriffs were to receive him; during which space he rose out of his chair, and standing on his feet, leaned his shoulder to the wall, and lifting his eyes up towards heaven, he opened his little book in his hand and said: 'O Lord, this is the last time that ever I shall open this book. Let some comfortable place now chance unto me whereby I, Thy poor servant, may glorify Thee in this my last hour;' and with that, looking into the book, the first thing that came

to his sight were these words: *Hæc est autem vita æterna ut cognoscant Te solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum. Ego Te clarificavi super terram; opus consummavi, quod dedisti mihi ut faciam. Et nunc clarifica me Tu, Pater, apud temetipsum, claritate quam habui, etc.*<sup>1</sup> [This is everlasting life, that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee upon earth, I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do, &c.] And with that he shut the book together, and said: 'Here is even learning enough for me to my life's end.' And so (the sheriff being ready for him) he was taken up again among certain of the sheriff's men, with a new and much greater company of weapons than was before, and carried to the scaffold on the Tower Hill, otherwise called East Smithfield, himself praying all the way, and recording upon the words which he had read. And when he was come to the foot of the scaffold, they that carried him offered to help him up the stairs, but then said he: 'Nay, masters, seeing I am come so far, let me alone, and ye shall see me shift for myself well enough,'<sup>2</sup> and so went up the stairs without any help, so lively, that it was marvel to them that knew before of his debility and weakness. But as he was mounting up the stairs, the south-east sun shined very bright in his face; whereupon he said to himself these words, lifting up

<sup>1</sup> Jn. xvii. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> He here put down the staff on which he had hitherto been leaning. (See Stapleton, *Tres Thomæ*, p. 354, edit. 1612, and Sander-Lewis, p. 122.) This staff is now preserved by the Eyston family at Hendred House, Berks.

his hands: *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini, et facies vestræ non confundentur.*<sup>1</sup> [Come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded.]

"By that time he was upon the scaffold, it was about ten of the clock, when the executioner, being ready to do his office, kneeled down to him (as the fashion is) and asked him forgiveness. 'I forgive thee,' said he, 'with all my heart, and I trust thou shalt see me overcome this storm lustily.'<sup>2</sup> Then was his gown and tippet taken from him, and he stood in his doublet and hose, in the sight of all the people, whereof was no small number assembled to see this horrible execution. There was to be seen a long, lean, and slender body, having on it little other substance besides the skin and bones, inso-much as most part of the beholders marvelled much to see a living man so far consumed, for he seemed a very image of death, and as it were death in a man's shape, using a man's voice; and therefore monstrous was it thought that the King could be so cruel as to put such a man to death as he was, yea, though he had been an offender indeed. And surely it may be thought that, if he had been in the Turk's dominion, and there found guilty of some great offence, yet would the Turk never have put him to death, being already so near death. For it is an horrible and exceeding cruelty to kill that thing

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxiii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> According to Chapuys, "he was very earnestly solicited after he mounted the scaffold to comply with the King's wish on an offer of pardon, but he refused and died very virtuously." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 948.)

which is presently dying, except it be for pity's sake to rid it from longer pain, which in this case appeared not. And therefore it may be thought that the cruelty and hard heart of King Henry in this point passed all the Turks and tyrants that ever have been heard or read of.

“When the innocent and holy Cardinal was come upon the scaffold, he spake to the people in effect as followeth: ‘Christian people, I am come hither to die for the faith of Christ’s holy Catholic Church, and I thank God hitherto my stomach hath served me very well thereunto, so that yet I have not feared death; wherefore I do desire you all to help and assist me with your prayers, that at the very point and instant of death’s stroke, I may in that very moment stand steadfast without fainting in any one point of the Catholic Faith, free from any fear. And I beseech Almighty God of His infinite goodness to save the King and this realm, and that it may please Him to hold His holy hand over it, and send the King good counsel.’

“These or like words he spake with such a cheerful countenance, such a stout and constant courage, and such a reverend gravity, that he appeared to all men not only void of fear, but also glad of death. Besides this he uttered his words so distinctly, and with so loud and clear a voice, that the people were astonished thereat, and noted it for a miraculous thing, to hear so plain and audible a voice come from so weak and sickly an old body; for the youngest man in that presence, being in good and perfect health, could not have spoken

to be better heard and perceived than he was. Then after these few words by him uttered, he kneeled down on his knees and said certain prayers, among which (as some reported) one was the hymn of *Te Deum laudamus* to the end, and the psalm *In Te Domine speravi*.<sup>1</sup>

"Then came the executioner and bound a handkercher about his eyes, and so this holy Father, lifting up his hands and heart to Heaven, said a few prayers, which were not long but fervent and devout; which being ended, he laid his holy head down over the midst of a little block, where the executioner, being ready with a sharp and heavy axe, cut asunder his slender neck at one blow, which bled so abundantly that many wondered to see so much blood issue out of so lean and slender a body. And so, head and body being severed, his innocent soul mounted to the blissful joys of Heaven."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the martyr's crown was won—the soul of God's servant could no longer be vexed with the malice of his enemies, but the sacred tabernacle in which that soul had dwelt, was still in their power, to be treated with the utmost contempt and barbarity, hereafter to be compensated for by a special halo of glory. The body was stripped of

<sup>1</sup> The Arundel MS. (152, ff. 229, 230) adds that after these prayers he spoke to the people and asked them that when they saw the blow about to fall, they should all cry out with a loud voice the holy name of Jesus. And so it was done.

<sup>2</sup> Van Ortrov, pp. 334-346.

all its clothes, and in that state left for the greater part of the day, until some one out of pity and humanity covered it with a little straw. No tokens of veneration were permitted, such as doubtless many would have desired to show towards so holy a man; the people were not allowed even to approach, and the scaffold was guarded by a number of halberdiers and men-at-arms. About eight o'clock in the evening, an order came from the Council that the body should be buried; whereupon, says the old account, "two of the watchers took it upon a halbert between them, and so carried it to the Churchyard of All Hallows, Barking, where, on the north side of the church hard by the wall, they digged a grave with their halberts, and therein, without any reverence, tumbled the body of the holy prelate and blessed martyr, all naked . . . without either sheet or other accustomed things belonging to a Christian man's burial, and so covered it quickly with earth, following herein the King's commandment, who willed that it should be buried contemptuously."

The venerable head of the martyr, according to common tradition, was by her own command, carried to Anne Boleyn, who after looking at it contemptuously for some time, said these or the like words: "Is this the head that so often exclaimed against me? I trust it shall never do me more harm," and striking the mouth with the back of her hand, received a wound from a tooth, which left a scar till her death. This, however, it must be observed, the early biographer only



mentions as report, without vouching for its truth.<sup>1</sup> What remains to be told belongs to history.

“The next day after his burial, the head being somewhat parboiled in hot water, was pricked upon a pole and set on high upon London Bridge, among the rest of the holy Carthusians’ heads that suffered death before him. And here I cannot omit to declare unto you the miraculous sight of this head, which after it had stood up the space of fourteen days upon the bridge, could not be perceived to waste nor consume, neither for the weather, which was then very hot, neither for the parboiling in hot water, but grew daily fresher and fresher, so that in his lifetime he never looked so well. For his cheek being beautified with a comely red, the face looked as if it had beholden the people passing by and would have spoke to them, which many took for a miracle. . . . Wherefore the people coming daily to see this strange sight, the passage over the bridge was so stopped with their going and coming, that almost neither cart nor horse could pass; and therefore at the end of fourteen days, the executioner was commanded to throw down the head in the night-time into the river Thames, and in the place thereof was set the head of the most blessed and constant martyr, Sir Thomas More, his companion and fellow in all his troubles, who suffered his passion on the 6th day of July next following.”

Whether this venerable relic was actually thrown into the river or merely taken down and put away

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortoy rejects it as unauthentic, p. 347, note.

seems doubtful. The early Life in another place speaks of it as "taken down and hidden," and this is also the expression of Chauncy the Carthusian, who was in London at the time, and of the accounts of various foreigners who wrote on the subject.

From the letters of Chapuys, it appears that an offer of pardon was made to the martyr, as he mounted the scaffold, on the condition of his complying with the King's will, and that a confessor had been sent to him, who was one of his greatest enemies. This is supposed to have been no other than Cranmer. Whether the holy man accepted his services or not, is not recorded. One may presume that he did not, though *in articulo mortis* the Church would permit him to confess to an excommunicated schismatic or heretic.<sup>1</sup>

History records the universal indignation excited throughout Christendom by the atrocious martyrdom of this holy and learned Cardinal, coming so soon as it did after the massacre of the Carthusians, and so closely followed by that of the Blessed Thomas More. England was under a dominion of terror, and within the realm none dared openly to express their opinion; but a foreigner then resident here has related, that the "regret and compassion of the people was inconceivable," and Reginald Pole, who happily was beyond the reach

<sup>1</sup> Chapuys wrote to Charles V., 30 June: "There was given to him as confessor one of his greatest enemies, the greatest Lutheran in the world and patron of all the devilries here," and adds that after the execution this Lutheran "does not cease to say that one of the holiest men in the world has been put to death."

of the tyrant, has given faithful expression to the common sentiment of outraged justice and piety.

On the Continent various letters were circulated relating the martyrdom of Fisher, as well as the King's other acts of violence and oppression. The best known being one that went under the name of Erasmus.<sup>1</sup>

The most precious attestation, however, which we have to the contemporary sentiment about the martyrdom, is contained in the letter of Pope Paul III. to Ferdinand, King of the Romans. After denouncing the enormous crimes and schismatical acts of the King of England, the Holy Father thus speaks of Blessed John Fisher: "When in our late creation of Cardinals, to honour the virtue and sanctity of the Bishop of Rochester, we placed him among their number, hoping that that dignity, which is everywhere wont to be counted venerable, would be effective in procuring his freedom, in this also Henry chose to be like himself in his many former cruelties, and like his forefather Henry II., by whose hatred and persecution the Blessed Thomas, Bishop of Canterbury, became a martyr. But this Henry has far exceeded the impiety of the former one. He slew one only, this man many. He slew the defender of the rights of

<sup>1</sup> This famous letter was not written by Erasmus, nor by his secretary, Gilbert Cousin of Nozeray, in Burgundy, whose name it bears; but by Philip Dumont (Montanus) to whom it purports to be addressed. It has been printed several times, notably in the Leyden edition of Erasmus' *Opera omnia* (1703), vol. iii. col. 1763-71. It bears the title, *Gulielmus Courinus Nucrinus Philippo Montano*, and the date of 23 July, 1535. Cf. Van Ortroij, p. 35, note 2.

one particular Church, this man the defender of the rights of the Church Universal. He an Archbishop, this man a Cardinal of the Roman Church.”<sup>1</sup>

It was in vain that Cromwell, by the King's orders, wrote his despatches to the Ambassadors and others abroad. The judgment of all Christendom was already irrevocably pronounced, and pronounced on evidence which could not be called in question. It has now been confirmed by the solemn verdict of the Holy See.

It would be a still further cause of joy, if we were able to pay due honour to the sacred remains of this illustrious martyr, or even to point out the place where they await their glorious resurrection. Unfortunately this is not the case, nor does there appear to be much hope of our being able to discover the spot.

The venerable head, whether thrown into the Thames or put away and hidden, is lost to us. The body, as we know, was buried in Barking Churchyard, near the Tower, on the north side, either by the north wall, as the early Life says, or by the north door, according to the Grey Friars' Chronicle, and seven years later it was noticed that not a blade of grass had grown on the spot, which remained as bare as if it had been continually trodden upon.

The sacred treasure did not remain long in Barking Churchyard. The same Grey Friars' Chronicle relates, that after the death of Sir Thomas More, “then was taken up the Bishop again, and both of them buried within the Tower,”

<sup>1</sup> Bridgett, p. 415, from Ciaconius, *Vite Pontificum*, iii. 574.

that is, in the Church of St. Peter ad Vincula, wherein were laid so many illustrious and holy men. It is not clear that this translation took place immediately after Sir Thomas's execution, but it was presumably at least accomplished through the piety of his daughter, Margaret Roper.

Weever, in his *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, but without giving his authority for the statement, asserts that the same Margaret Roper afterwards removed her father's remains to Chelsea Church, and thinks it probable that the holy Cardinal's body was again translated at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we are left in uncertainty as to a fact which it would greatly interest us to learn. Perhaps some happy day the mystery may yet be cleared up, and Catholics be permitted to venerate the bones of this Blessed Martyr, whose soul has already entered into the joy of his Lord.

R. S.

[Since Father Stanton wrote the preceding life, the ancient biography which had previously been attributed to Richard Hall has been edited, with full critical apparatus, by Père Van Ortroï, S.J., Bollandist :—*Vie du bienheureux martyr Jean Fisher*, Bruxelles, 1893. The present editor has thought it best to rewrite all the notes, making use of the information furnished by Père Van Ortroï. Father Stanton's text on the other hand, did not seem to need many changes, and with a few verbal alterations has been exactly preserved.]

<sup>1</sup> See the *Life of Blessed Thomas More*, supra.

AUTHORITIES.—Fisher has left no series of letters, similar to those of B. Thomas More, but we have numerous theological works and tractates, and sermons. The titles and editions are conveniently arranged in Gillow's *Bibliographical Dictionary*, ii. 267.

There is an edition of his *Latin Works*, Wirceburgi, 1597, folio, and the Early English Text Society have commenced an edition of his *English Works* (Extra Series, vol. xxvii.), 1876, but only one volume has as yet appeared. A volume in the Record Office (27 Henry VIII. n. 887) contains in Fisher's hand English prayers, a fragment of a Commentary on the Salutation of the B. Virgin Mary, and other theological treatises.

Upon the Divorce Fisher has left us a treatise, now in the British Museum (Arundel 151, ff. 202—339), entitled *Matri-monii cuiusdam, etc., brevis apologia*. This forms the first book of Nicholas Harpsfield's *Treatise on the pretended Divorce*. (Camden Soc., 1878, Edit. Pocock.) For the subject of the Divorce, see Dr. S. Ehses, *Römische Dokumente zur Geschichte der Ehescheidung Heinrichs VIII. von England* (Paderborn, 1893, published by the Görres-Gesellschaft), also three separate papers in the *Historisches Jahrbuch*, ix. (1888), *Päpstliche Decretale in dem Scheidungs-Prozesse Heinrichs VIII.* and one in vol. xiii., *Papst Klemens VII., &c.*, also Gairdner's summary of the arguments entitled, *New Lights on the Divorce of Henry VIII.* in the *English Historical Review*, 1896 to 1897, and also Friedmann's *Anne Boleyn*, London, 1884. For his trial, the official documents are preserved in the Record Office, *Baga de Secretis* (see *Third Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records*, 1842). The indictment is printed by Bruce in *Archæologia*, vol. xxv. pp. 9—45.

BIOGRAPHIES.—The earliest is that which was until lately attributed to Dr. Richard Hall. Father Van Ortroij (Brussels, 1893) has published a critical edition, discussing also the sources. Of modern biographers, Father T. E. Bridgett, *Life of Blessed John Fisher* (1888 and 1890) is by far the most important, but we may enumerate works by John Lewis (Edit. T. Hudson Turner), London, 1855, which contain a valuable appendix of original documents; Cooper, *Athenæ Cantabrigi-*

*enses*, ii. 368; and *The Dictionary of National Biography* (J. Bass Mullinger); Baker's *History of St. John's College*, Edit. Mayor, 2 vols. 1869; Cooper's *Memoir of Lady Margaret*, 1874; *Early Statutes of the College of St. John the Evangelist*, Edit. Mayor, 1859.

RELICS.—The only primary relic known to exist is a small fragment of bone at Stonyhurst College.

At Hendred House, Berks, is preserved the walking staff which he carried to the scaffold. It is about five feet long.

PORTRAIT.—The only portrait on which we can rely is the Holbein sketch in the Royal Collection at Windsor (1527). But there are ancient pictures of the Blessed Martyr at St. John's and Queen's Colleges, Cambridge.

## VI.

### THE BLESSED THOMAS MORE.

*Tower Hill, 6 July, 1535.*

A STORY is told of our martyr as a babe which viewed in the light of his after-life seems specially characteristic. His nurse was carrying him on horseback during some journey, when they came to a river which had to be forded. On reaching the opposite side, the horse slipped while trying to mount it, and the nurse in her alarm threw her little charge on to the bank. The precaution turned out to be unnecessary, as the horse got out safely, and the nurse, recovering from her fright, ran in some trepidation to see what had happened to the babe. It had fallen over a hedge and into a ditch. But far from being hurt or even frightened, the little one lay there smiling, and as he was lifted out he laughed and crowed in his glee.

That is the first recorded scene in More's life, and he was true to himself in all the changes that followed—stainless ever, ever smiling! When the angels came to bear his blessed soul from the scaffold to the skies they found him still undismayed by danger, unscathed by the thorns of life, pure in



heart as a chrisom-babe, the smile with which he had faced so many trials transfigured by the light of victory. His was a beautiful life from first to last. In his day he was known as the darling of England, and later generations, deeply prejudiced though they were against the religion he held more dear than life, have been unable to restrain their admiration for his noble character.

Thomas More was born between two and three in the morning of Saturday, the 7th of February, 1477-8. He was the only surviving son of Sir John More, then a barrister living in Milk Street, Cheapside. His mother was his father's first wife, Agnes daughter of Thomas Graunger. On the first night of the marriage the young wife is said to have dreamt that she saw engraved on her wedding-ring the likeness of the children whom God would give her. One of them was so obscure that she could not recognize the features, and this referred to a still-born child, while another shone with a splendour far surpassing all the rest. When her husband, in later years, told this story to his already famous son, he doubtless thought that the brightness prefigured the temporal dignity to which he had attained, but we know that God had destined for Thomas More a far brighter glory than that of being Lord Chancellor of England and favourite councillor of his King.

As a boy Thomas was sent to St. Anthony's School, Threadneedle Street, where his future friends, John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, and William Latimer had studied under the same excellent

master, Nicholas Holt. At the age of thirteen, however, he was placed by his father in the household of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor. The Cardinal took a great interest in the gifted boy, and would often say of him to the nobles that dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man." He further showed his interest by recommending that he should be sent to Oxford.

More seems to have gone up to Oxford at the early age of fourteen. He entered at Canterbury College, which was afterwards absorbed into Christchurch, where its memory is still preserved in the well-known "Canterbury Gate."<sup>1</sup> He seems to have had a somewhat Spartan training, for his father gave him barely sufficient money to supply himself with necessaries, and in after-life he spoke of "Oxford fare" as the lowest depth of his experiences. His father seems to have wished that he should learn thus early to be frugal and sober, and so be saved

<sup>1</sup> Roper says that "he placed him" there; and as a matter of fact, as Archbishop of Canterbury, Morton had the right of presentation to scholarships in this College. The College was founded by Archbishop Simon Islip in 1363 principally "as a nursery and supply for the famous monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury." The founder appointed therein twelve scholars, of whom four were to be monks of Canterbury and the rest seculars. Under his successor, Simon Langham, after an appeal to Rome, the secular scholars were replaced by monks. Archbishop Courtenay however added five more youths, three of whom were always to be maintained by the Archbishop, and the other two by the Prior and Chapter of Canterbury. The College fell into great poverty before its dissolution in 1531.

from extravagance and vice, and for this wise discipline More was wont to express his gratitude.

Here he became acquainted with Thomas Linacre and William Grocyn, who had lately returned from Italy, and from the former he received his earliest instructions in Greek. Although his avocations prevented him from ever becoming a finished scholar, his natural genius enabled him to detect at a glance the meaning of any Greek sentence that was put before him. He bestowed more pains upon the cultivation of his Latin style, which was greatly admired by Erasmus and his critical contemporaries. His father however feared that too great a devotion to literature would distract him from the drier studies of the law, and removed him from Oxford after a residence of about two years.

In February, 1496, at the age of eighteen, he was admitted into the Society of Lincoln's Inn as a student, and made such rapid progress that he was called to the outer bar after a shorter period of probation than was customary. He was appointed reader or lecturer on law at Furnival's Inn, one of the Inns of Chancery dependent on Lincoln's Inn, where his lectures gave such satisfaction that his appointment was renewed three successive years.

But his legal studies by no means absorbed his whole time or thoughts. Not only did he follow his bent for literature, and produce epigrams, poems, and even "little comedies" both in Latin and English, but he gave himself with even greater fervour to the study of the Fathers of the Church. Thus we find him giving a course of lectures on St. Augustine's

*De Civitate Dei* in the Church of St. Laurence Jewry, which was attended by the most learned men of the day. His friendship with William Lily led to the joint composition of a collection of Latin epigrams translated from the Greek anthology, which were published in 1518. Colet became not only his intimate friend but his spiritual guide, and in a beautiful letter which is still preserved, More bitterly regrets his director's temporary absence from town.

When he was about twenty-one, the future martyr had serious doubts as to his true vocation. He thought that God called him to be a priest, and he retired to the London Charterhouse, there to seek by prayer and austerities to know the divine will. It is a beautiful picture, that of the ardent young man, in the flower of his youth and the full enjoyment of life, thus earnestly striving to follow "the royal way of the holy Cross" in the austere solitude of the Charterhouse. As he wrote to Colet, "What is there in the city to incite to virtue? On the contrary, when one wishes to live well, by a thousand devices and seductions the life of a city drags one down. False love and flattery on the one side; on the other, hatreds and quarrels and legal wranglings. One sees nothing but butchers, fishmongers, cooks, confectioners, fishermen, fowlers, ministering to the appetites of the body, and to the world and to its prince, the devil." The contrast to all this must have been great among the holy brethren of the Charterhouse, where the saintly Prior, William Tynbygh, ruled a community which had never lost

its primitive fervour, and some of whose members were already unconsciously preparing for martyrdom.

But Blessed Thomas found that it was not God's will that he should embrace the religious life, or even the secular priesthood. We may here fitly quote the words of his great-grandson, Cresacre More.

“When he was about eighteene or twentie yeares olde, finding his bodie by reason of his yeares most rebellious, he sought diligently to tame his unbridled concupiscence by wonderfull workes of mortification. He used oftentimes to weare a sharp shirt of hayre next his skinne, which he never left off wholly; no, not when he was Lord Chancellour of England, which my grandmother on a time in the heate of sommer espying, laught at, not being much sensible of such kinde of spirituall exercises, being carried away in her youth with the brauerie of the world, and not knowing *quæ sunt spiritûs*, wherein the true wisdom of a Christian man consisteth. He added also to this austeritie a discipline euerie fryday and high fasting dayes, thinking that such cheere was the best he could bestowe on his rebellious bodie, rather than that the handmayde *Sensualite* should growe too insolent over her mistresse *Reason*, hauing learned the true interpretation of these wordes of Christ: *He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it for life everlasting.* He used also much fasting and watching, lying often either vpon the bare

ground or vpon some bench, or laying some logg vnder his head, allotting himselfe but foure or fiue howers in a night at the most for his sleepe, imagining with the holie Saints of Christ's Church, that his bodie was to be vsed like an asse, with strokes and hard fare, least prouender might pricke it, and so bring his soule like a headstrong jade into the bottomelesse pitt of hell. For chastitie, especially in youth, is a lingering martyrdom, and these are the best meanes to preserve her from the dangerous gulphe of euill custome; but he is the best souldier in this fight that can runne fastest away from himselfe, this victory being hardly gotten with struiuing. He had inured himselfe to straitnesse that he might the better enter in at the narrow gate of heauen, which is not gott with ease, *sed violenti rapiunt illud*, that is to say, they that are boysterous against themselues, bear it away by force.

"For this cause he lived foure yeares among the Carthusians, dwelling neare the Charterhouse, frequenting daily their spiritual exercises, but without anie vow. He had an earnest mind also to be a Franciscan Fryer, that he might serue God in a state of perfection; but finding that at that time Religious men in England had somewhat degenerated from their ancient strictnesse, and feruour of spirit, he altered his minde. He had also after that togeather with his saythfull companion *Lillie* a purpose to be a priest; yet God had allotted him for another estate, not to liue solitarie, but that he might be a patterne to

married men, how they should carefully. bring vp their children, how dearely they should loue their wiues, how they should employe their endeauour wholly for the good of their countrie, yet excellently performe the vertues of religious men, as pietie, charitie, humilitie, obedience, and conjugall chastitie.

“ He heard an entire Masse euerie day, before he undertooke anie worldlie bussinesse; which custome he kept so religiously that being on a time sent for to the King, whilst he was hearing Masse, he would not once stirre, though he were twice or thrice sent for, vntill it was wholly finished, answering them that vrged him to come quickly, that he thought first to perfourme his dutie to a better man than the King was. . . . Neither was King *Henrie* any whitt angrie at that time with Sir Thomas More, but rather highly pleased with this his small neglect.

“ He vsed euerie day to say our Ladie's mattins, the seauen psalmes and letanies, and manie times the Gradual psalmes, with the psalme *Beati immaculati in via*, and diuerse other pious praiers, which he himselfe composed; he selected also manie sentences of the Psalmes, imitating therein S. Hierome's psalter, which are extant in the latter ende of his English Workes.

“ But finding his bodie for all his austeritie readie still to endanger his soule, although at all times he shunned idleness more than anie other man, he determined to marrie; and therefore he propounded to himselfe, as a patterne of life, a

singular lay-man *Iohn Picus*, Earle of *Mirandula* who was a man famous for virtue, and most eminent for learning; his life he translated, and sett out, as also manie of his most worthie letters, and his twelve precepts of good life; which are extant in the beginning of his English Workes.

“For this ende he also wrote a treatise both learned, spiritual, and devout, of the Foure last things of man, though he left it vnperfect, being called by his father to other studies.”<sup>1</sup>

More however never lost his fondness for the religious life. When he was a prisoner in the Tower, says Harpsfield, “he told his daughter Margaret that his short penning and putting up did little grieve him, for if it had not been for respect of his wife and children, he had voluntarily ere that time shut himself in as narrow or narrower room than that was.” However now, to use Harpsfield’s quaint phrase, “he fell to marriage.”

He chose a young lady named Joan or Jane Colte, daughter of an Essex gentleman. It is said that his fancy fell first on her younger sister, but that considering that the elder would feel slighted if her younger sister were married before her, “he then of a certain pity framed his fancy to her and soon after married her.”<sup>2</sup> This was early in 1505.

Erasmus gives us a pretty picture of the young couple. More took pleasure in moulding his wife to his own ideal, and had her instructed in all kinds

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More, pp. 15—19.

<sup>2</sup> Roper, p. 28.



of learning and accomplishments, especially music, "and made her such so that he could willingly have passed his whole life with her, but a premature death separated them." More always cherished a great love for the wife of his youth, and in his epitaph written more than twenty years after her death, he speaks of her as *uxorcula Mori*,—More's dear little wife. From this marriage sprang four children, Margaret the eldest, born late in 1505 or early the next year, Elizabeth, Cecily, and John the youngest, born in 1509. After about six years of happy wedded life, Joan More died. In spite of the caustic jests More was rather fond of making and repeating about women, it was not long before he took another wife. Indeed to our modern notions it is rather a shock that he consoled himself so speedily. But he doubtless found the care of four little children incompatible with a busy life like his, and in his second choice he looked for one who would be a mother to his motherless children rather than a helpmate for himself. Thus it was that within a month<sup>1</sup> after his first wife's death he came to his parish priest, John Bouge (or Bonge), "on a Sunday night late, and brought a dispensation to be married the next Monday without any banns asking."

But we must not anticipate. More lived with his first wife in Bucklersbury, close to the Poultry, Cheapside, in the parish of St. Stephen Wallbrook. "He proved a model husband," writes Mr. Sidney

<sup>1</sup> *English Historical Review*, vii. pp. 712—715. Letter of Dom John Bouge, a Carthusian of the Charterhouse of Axholme, below, p. 155.

Lee, "delighting in domesticity, and dividing his leisure between the care of his household and literary pursuits."

Soon after his marriage he invited the celebrated Erasmus to stay with him, and they amused themselves by translating some of Lucian's dialogues into Latin. More's friendship with Erasmus dated from 1498, when they met for the first time at the house of William Lord Mountjoy, with whom Erasmus was staying. They at once became great friends, although More was ten years younger than the great humanist, and had indeed only just reached the years of manhood. Erasmus delighted in praising his friend. "Did nature ever frame a sweeter, happier character than that of More?"<sup>1</sup> he cries enthusiastically. Their friendship lasted to the end, and when More died a martyr's death, none lamented him more sincerely than the scholar of Rotterdam. Father Bridgett avows that he cannot find the very slightest foundation for the assertion of Stapleton and Cresacre More that in the course of time their friendship cooled. It is not here the place to discuss the character of Erasmus. Dom Gasquet in his *Eve of the Reformation* has done this at some length and with much learning. He takes a favourable view both of the man and his works, whereas the great German historian, Janssen, is disposed to be more severe. We should be inclined to say that the chief testimony in favour of Erasmus is that he enjoyed the life-long friendship of both Blessed Thomas More and Blessed John Fisher.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 14.

It is indeed difficult to believe that these great champions and martyrs of the Faith would have cherished the friendship of one who was in reality its foe.

In 1508 More went abroad and visited the Universities of Louvain and Paris, which he found in no way superior to Oxford or Cambridge. In the same year Erasmus paid him another visit, and wrote under his roof his famous *Moriae Encomium*—"The Praise of Folly," the title of which was intended as a pun on his host's name, to whom indeed the work was dedicated. This book, which was a pungent satire on the ecclesiastical abuses of the day, became later on a favourite arsenal for heretics who had not wit to devise weapons of their own. But at the time of its publication it does not appear that it was considered to be dangerous or revolutionary. It was written in Latin, and intended for the learned, not for the ignorant, and More welcomed it as likely to help on the work of a Catholic Reformation for which all good men longed. It must be remembered that at this time all Europe was Catholic, and that Luther had not yet begun to attack the Faith. But Blessed Thomas, who was to become one of that Faith's most ardent defenders, well understood that a book which might be perfectly harmless under certain conditions, might become very dangerous in quite different circumstances. For as he wrote later against the heretic Tindale,<sup>1</sup> "In these days in which Tindale hath with the infection of his contagious heresies so sore poisoned malicious and

<sup>1</sup> *English Works*, p. 422.

new-fangled folk, . . . in these days in which men by their own default, misconstrue and take harm out of the very Scriptures of God, until men better amend, if any man would now translate *Moria* into English, or some works either that I have myself written ere this, albeit there be no harm therein, folk yet being given to take harm of that which is good, I would not only my darling's [*i.e.*, Erasmus's] books, but mine also, help to burn them both with mine own hands, rather than folk should (though through their own fault) take any harm of them, seeing that I see them likely in these days so to do." ✓

More was naturally inclined to jest and satire, and stupidity greatly tried him. He could never resist poking fun at people like the friar of Coventry, who taught that whoever said daily the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary would undoubtedly be saved, however badly he lived; or the Oxford theologians who thought the study of Greek next door to heretical; or the theologians of Louvain who exalted the subtilties of the later scholastics above the dissertations of the ancient Fathers—preferring even “these kitchenmaids to the most holy Bible, the Queen of all books,” or the religious who seemed to make Christianity itself consist in the observance of the minuter precepts of their rule. For such he had no mercy. But every page of his writings, to say nothing of his life and death, testifies to his passionate loyalty for the Church of God.

On April 21, 1509, an event occurred which formed a turning-point in the life of More, as it

was also to prove in the history of this country. Henry VII. died, and the young and promising Prince Henry succeeded to the throne. More had fallen into disgrace with the old King some four years before. In the spring of 1504 he had been elected a member of Parliament. The exactions of the King, seconded by Dudley and Empson (the former of whom was Speaker), had already exasperated the young lawyer, and when in this Parliament a Bill was introduced demanding an aid of three-fifteenths under pretext of the recent marriage of the King's eldest daughter Margaret with the King of Scotland, More led the Opposition so successfully that the Bill was thrown out. "The King had to forego the £113,000 demanded, and felt bound to surrender £10,000 of the £40,000 offered by the Commons in substitution."<sup>1</sup> The King's anger at being thwarted of his purpose by a "beardless boy," expended itself on his aged father, Sir John, who was thrown into the Tower on some frivolous pretext, until a fine of £100 had been extorted from him. The accession of the young and handsome prince, who united love of learning with zeal for religion, was hailed on all sides with unbounded joy, and with the new reign More soon experienced a change of fortune. He was already known to Henry, and we have an interesting letter of Erasmus which tells us how the two friends paid a visit to the prince when he was a child of nine, and how More on that occasion presented him with a poem.

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography; Statutes of the Realm*, ii. 975.

But before entering on More's public career we must return to his domestic life. In 1510, as we have seen, his first wife died, and within a month he married again. His second wife was a widow, Alice Middleton. She was seven years his senior, and neither beautiful nor well-educated, but she proved a kind mother to his little ones, and a vigilant and careful housewife. After his second marriage More moved to Crosby Place, in Bishopsgate Street Without, close to the beautiful old church of St. Helen's. Here he lived for about twelve years, until in 1523 he built his famous house at Chelsea.

His professional work prospered. He made about £400 a year (equivalent to at least ten times as much now), and soon after Henry VIII.'s accession was elected a bencher of Lincoln's Inn, and was reader there the following year. On September 3, 1510, he was made Under Sheriff of London.

In 1515 he was sent on an embassy to Flanders to represent the London merchants in some dispute which had arisen with foreign traders of the Steel-yard, and was absent from home about six months. The embassy was headed by Cuthbert Tunstall, afterwards Bishop of Durham, a constant friend of More's. He only received 13s. 4d. a day for his expenses, which was insufficient to maintain him, to say nothing of his wife and children at home, who, as he playfully complained, were unwilling to fast during his absence. It was at Antwerp that he met Peter Giles, or Ægidius, a friend of Erasmus, and found time to sketch his imaginary island of

Utopia. The work was completed and published the following year. It is so well known that it is unnecessary to describe it here. It may be one of those works of his which More expressed his willingness to burn, rather than that the new heretics should make capital out of it. Mr. Seebohm and other Protestant writers have indeed endeavoured to seek controversial weapons in this characteristic *jeu d'esprit* of More's. No doubt there was many a truth which the writer sought to drive home to the Government of the day under the cloak of playful satire, but it is preposterous to argue that More at this or at any other period of his life seriously held up the Utopian religion with its women-priests and absence of sacrament and ceremony as an ideal which Catholics would do well to imitate.

Nor can he have wished to introduce a system of universal toleration in religion, which he had only conceived as "Utopian." "His theological tracts and his personal practice in and out of office amply prove that he viewed religious toleration in workaday life as undermining the foundations of society, and in conflict with laws both human and divine. More's practical opinion on religion and politics must be sought elsewhere than in the *Utopia*."<sup>1</sup>

The embassy to Flanders was the first step in the royal favour, and others were soon to follow. More had presented the King with an *Epithalamium*

<sup>1</sup> Sidney Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 443. Particular cases, however, occurred in which More was most tolerant. See below, pp. 154, 161, 164 note 2, 173.

on the occasion of his marriage with Catherine of Arragon, and he soon won his affection. On his return from Flanders, he was offered a pension, which he refused at first, but was afterwards forced to accept. Erasmus feared he would be carried away by a whirlwind of Court favour, for not only the King but Wolsey, the omnipotent Minister, did all in their power to attract him to the Court, but More's pure spirit valued above all earthly prizes that freedom of conscience and liberty of action which the courtier has so often to sacrifice to the smiles of royalty. This is why he would, if he could, have refused the pension, and far from running after promotion and favour at Court, shrank from it as from a burden and a danger. But Henry VIII., always imperious, gave him no choice.

We must pass rapidly over the events of the next few years, in which More mounted quickly up the ladder of promotion, till the greatest prize that England had to offer was in his grasp. The success with which he repressed the riot in the city on "the evil May-day," 1517, and even more the ability with which he refuted the claim of the Crown to seize a vessel belonging to the Pope which had put in at Southampton, so impressed the King that he determined at once to make him an officer of the Crown.

In 1518 he was made Master of Requests, or examiner of the petitions which were presented to the King during his progresses through the country, an office which entailed his being constantly with the Court and so absent from the home circle,



a loss which he greatly deplored. In the spring of 1521 he was knighted and appointed Privy Councillor.

“Being then retained in the King’s service,” says Harpsfield, “the King gave him a notable and worthy lesson and charge that in all his doings and affairs touching the King, he should first respect and regard God, and afterwards the King his master, which lesson and instruction never was there, I trow, any prince’s servant that more willingly heard or more faithfully and effectually executed and accomplished. . . . And in this race of the King’s service he ran painfully, wisely, and honourably twenty years and above, and neither was there any one man that the King used more familiarly, nor with whom he more debated, not only for public affairs, but in matters of learning withal, taking a great comfort besides in his merry and pleasant conceited wit. And he took such pleasure in his company that he would sometimes upon the sudden come to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him, whither on a time unlooked for he came to dinner, and, after dinner, in a fair garden of his walked with him by the space of an hour holding his arms about his neck. Of all of which favours he made no more account than a deep wise man should do. . . . Wherefore when that after the King’s departure, his son-in-law, Mr. William Roper, rejoicingly came unto him, saying these words, ‘Sir, how happy are you whom the King hath so familiarly entertained, as I have never seen him do to any

other except Cardinal Wolsey, whom I have seen his Grace walk withal arm in arm,' Sir Thomas More answered in this sort: 'I thank our Lord, son, I find his Grace my very good Lord indeed, and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as he doth any subject within this realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head could win him one castle in France, it should not fail to serve his turn.' "

Thus when another man would have been dazzled by the rays of royal favour, Blessed Thomas remained unmoved, never forgetting the divine warning, "Put not your trust in princes, or in any child of man, for there is no help in them." And thus when all around him fell away, he stood upright, invincible, as little moved by the thunders of the King's displeasure, as he had been by the sunshine of his favour.

In 1520 he had to accompany his master to the famous meeting of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and afterwards took part in welcoming the Emperor Charles V. to England. Next year he was made Under-Treasurer, "an office which corresponds in some respects with that of Chancellor of the Exchequer at the present day." Again he had to cross the sea on an embassy to Bruges and Calais, this time in the company of Wolsey himself. The avowed object of this expedition was to bring about peace between the Emperor and the King of France, and as the King specially directed Wolsey to make More privy to all such matters as should

be treated of, More no doubt knew that the real subject of the conferences was the betrothal of the Emperor to his cousin, the Princess Mary of England.

It was at Bruges that More characteristically silenced a vainglorious student who had offered to publicly dispute on any branch of human learning, by jestingly challenging him to discuss with him, *An averia capta in withernamia sint irreplegiabilia*, i.e., "whether cattle seized under the writ termed withernam were irrepleviable," a question the student was fain to acknowledge himself unable to solve!

More grew daily in favour both with King and Cardinal. He received grants of land in Oxfordshire and Kent in 1522 and again in 1525, and in April, 1523, at Wolsey's suggestion was, in spite of his protests, elected Speaker of the House of Commons, where he so satisfied his patrons that Wolsey recommended him (August 24, 1523) for a gift of £100, besides the fee usually bestowed on the Speaker. More, however, maintained his independence of character. A story is told by Roper<sup>1</sup> of his having opposed the subsidy demanded in the name of the King by the great Cardinal in person. He also induced the Council to reject a scheme of Wolsey's for creating a new dignity, that of Supreme Constable of the Kingdom, who should represent the King everywhere. The Cardinal in his anger exclaimed, "Are you not ashamed, Mr. More, being the last in place and

<sup>1</sup> P. 39.

dignity to dissent from so many noble and prudent men? You show yourself a foolish councillor;" to which More retorted, "Thanks be to God that his royal Highness has but one fool in his Council."<sup>1</sup>

More's shrewd wit could not but see and be amused by the Cardinal's foibles, especially the grossness of his appetite for flattery, but though of characters so different, their relations seem on the whole to have been cordial.

In July, 1525, More was appointed to the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, and in 1527 and 1528 was again engaged on embassies abroad.

Writing in 1519, Erasmus draws a beautiful picture of More as a courtier:<sup>2</sup>

"In serious matters no man's advice is more prized, while if the King wishes to recreate himself, no man's conversation is gayer. Often there are deep and intricate matters that demand a grave and prudent judge. More unravels them in such a way that he satisfies both sides. No one, however, has ever prevailed on him to receive a gift for his decision. Happy the commonwealth where Kings appoint such officials! His elevation has brought with it no pride. Amidst all the weight of state affairs he remembers the humble friends of old, and from time to time returns to his beloved literature. Whatever influence he has acquired by his dignity, whatever favour he enjoys with his opulent King, he uses for the good of the State and the assistance

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ap. Bridgett, p. 57.

of his friends. He was ever desirous of conferring benefits, and wonderfully prone to compassion. This disposition has grown with his power of indulging it. Some he assists with money, others he protects by his authority, others he advances by his recommendation. If he can help in no other way, he does it by his counsels; he sends no one away dejected. You would say that he had been appointed the public guardian of all those in need."

But in order to see More at his best we must turn to his domestic circle, and study that beautiful home-life which has been portrayed for us by Roper and in the letters of Erasmus, as skilfully as have been the features of its members upon the great canvas of Holbein. In 1523 he bought a piece of ground at Chelsea, then a small village entirely separated from London, and even from Westminster. Here he laid out a large garden stretching down to the river, and built himself a mansion about a hundred yards from the river-side, "commodious rather than magnificent," says Erasmus. This house has unhappily disappeared (Beaufort Row now runs over its site), but it is at least a consolation to the Catholic to think that on part of this ground now stands a humble sanctuary where the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is continually exposed in expiation for the sins of men.

More's household was a large one. It consisted of his old father, his wife, his daughter Margaret,

and her husband William Roper, his daughters Elizabeth and Cecily, his only son John, who was about thirteen at the time of the removal to Chelsea, his step-daughter Alice Middleton and her husband ; also Giles Heron, his ward, who afterwards married Elizabeth More, Margaret Giggs, an orphan relative whom he brought up as one of his own children, and her husband John Clement, who was a doctor of medicine and probably acted as tutor to the family. Then there was John Harris, More's secretary, who married Dorothy Colley, Margaret Roper's excellent lady's-maid. There was also a "fool," who was a great favourite of Sir Thomas, by name Henry Patenson. If we add to these the household and body-servants, of whom there were a goodly number both of men and women, as More's position required, it will be seen that Sir Thomas had no small family to rule.

And well and nobly he ruled it in the fear of God, learning, and industry. Erasmus writes: "More has been careful to have all his children from their earliest years thoroughly imbued, first with chaste and holy morals and then with polite letters. Even in these days, when the higher education of women is so much to the fore, we marvel at the learning of his daughters."

"A year ago," continues Erasmus,<sup>1</sup> "it occurred to More to send me a specimen of their progress in study. He bade them all write to me, each one without any help, neither the subject being

<sup>1</sup> To Budée, 1521.

suggested nor the language corrected.<sup>1</sup> . . . When they had done so, he closed the letters and sent them to me without changing a syllable. Believe me, dear Budée, I was never more surprised; there was nothing whatever either silly or girlish in what was said, and the style was such you could feel they were making daily progress. . . . In that house you will find none idle, no one busied in feminine trifles. Titus Livius is ever in their hands. They have advanced so far that they can read such authors and understand them without a translation, unless there occurs some such word as would perhaps perplex myself. His wife, who excels in good sense and experience rather than in learning, governs the little company with wonderful tact, assigning to each a task, and requiring its performance, allowing no one to be idle or to be occupied in trifles."

When absent from home, as so often happened owing to his duties at Court, More still superintended the education of his children. He expected each of them to write him a Latin letter almost every day, and he wrote the most delightful replies, which were naturally prized as great treasures, and some of which Stapleton has handed down to us. He says the originals were almost worn to pieces so frequently had they been read. One of them is headed "Thomas More to his whole school," another "Thomas More to his dearest children,

<sup>1</sup> Of course they wrote in Latin. Erasmus did not understand English.

and to Margaret Giggs, whom he numbers amongst his own." In one of them he writes :<sup>1</sup>

"If I did not love you so much, I should be really envious of your happiness in having so many and such excellent tutors. But I think you have no longer any need of Mr. Nicholas, since you have learnt whatever he had to teach you about astronomy. I hear you are so far advanced in that science that you can not only point out the polar star or the dog star, or any of the constellations, but are able also—which requires a skilful and profound astrologer—among all these leading heavenly bodies, to distinguish the sun from the moon! Go forward, then, in that new and admirable science by which you ascend to the stars. But while you gaze on them assiduously, consider that this holy time of Lent warns you, and that beautiful and holy poem of Boethius keeps singing in your ears, to raise your mind also to heaven, lest the soul look downwards to the earth, after the manner of brutes, while the body looks upwards. Farewell, my dearest. From Court, the 23rd of March."

In one of his letters to his beloved eldest daughter he writes :

"I beg you, Margaret, tell me about the progress you are making in your studies. For, I assure you that, rather than allow my children to be idle and slothful, I would make a sacrifice of wealth, and

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton, p. 229.



bid adieu to other cares and business, to attend to my children and my family, amongst whom none is more dear to me than yourself, my beloved daughter."

He was, at the same time, most anxious that their progress in learning should not make them vainglorious, and writes to one of their tutors:<sup>1</sup>

"That this plague of vainglory may be banished far from my children, I do desire that you, my dear Gunnell, and their mother and all their friends, would sing this song to them, and repeat it, and beat it into their heads, that vainglory is a thing despicable and to be spit upon; and that there is nothing more sublime than that humble modesty so often praised by Christ; and this your prudent charity will so enforce as to teach virtue rather than reprove vice, and make them love good advice instead of hating it. To this purpose nothing will more conduce than to read to them the lessons of the ancient Fathers, who they know cannot be angry with them, and, as they honour them for their sanctity, they must needs be much moved by their authority."

His tenderness was equal to his wisdom. What could be more charming than this reply to a daughter's request?

"You ask, my dear Margaret, for money with too much bashfulness and timidity, since you are

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton, p. 228.

asking from a father who is eager to give, and since you have written to me a letter such that I would not only repay each line of it with a golden philippine, as Alexander did the verses of Cherilos, but, if my means were as great as my desire, I would reward each syllable with two gold *uncia*. As it is, I send only what you have asked, but would have added more, only that as I am eager to give, so am I desirous to be asked and coaxed by my daughter, especially by you, whom virtue and learning have made so dear to my soul. So the sooner you spend this money well, as you are wont to do, and the sooner you ask for more, the more you will be sure of pleasing your father."

In one of his Latin Epigrams (published in 1520) he gives a charming picture of his return home after one of his absences, how he always bought his children some little present, cakes or fruit, or pieces of silk to deck them, and gave them plenty of kisses and very few strokes, and these with a rod of peacock feathers only. In fact, the more we hear of this delightful home circle, with its ardent mutual love and beautiful harmony and concord, the higher is the admiration and love we feel for its head.

But not only did More take care and thought for his children, his servants also were not forgotten. He was specially careful that they should not remain idle, and so fall into vicious habits. So as he had to have several men-servants to

attend him when on duty at Court, he took care that when at home they should have plenty of occupation. He divided his garden into portions, assigning one to each of his men to cultivate. He had some taught to sing and others to play on the organ, but he absolutely forbade games of cards or dice. The men-servants lived quite apart from the maids, and they seldom met.

As his family increased he built a sort of pavilion in his garden, which was called "the New Building," and here he had his oratory, where every evening he assembled the household for night prayers, at which he presided even when Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> He had leave to have Mass in his oratory, but on Sundays and feast-days he always insisted on the whole household attending Mass in the parish church.

On Good Friday he would have the whole of the Passion read, and would sometimes interrupt the reading by some words of pious meditation. At table one of his daughters intoned "after the monastic fashion" a passage of Holy Scripture, ending correctly with *Tu autem Domine, miserere nobis*. Then a commentary by one of the Fathers was read, which would be followed by a discussion on some point suggested by the reading. All this was in Latin; but afterwards there would be some

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More says these prayers consisted of the psalms *Miserere*; *Ad te Domine levavi*; *Deus misereatur nostri*; the *Salve Regina*, the *De profundis* for the dead, and some others. On the eves of great festivals he used to get his family to watch "all the Mattins." (p. 92.)

amusing and cheerful conversation in English, in which the fool would take his part.

His great-grandson sums it all up as follows: "It might well be said of him, which the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon, 'Blessed art thou; and blessed be thy Lord God; and blessed are all they that attend and wait on thee.' For no doubt there was the Spirit of God in that family, where everyone was busied about somewhat or other, . . . as it were in some religious house, all chaste, all courteous, all devout." Erasmus adds that God blessed the servants "so that none lived but in better estate after More's death, and none was ever touched with the least aspersion of any evil fame." More's charity to his poorer neighbours was as conspicuous as his other virtues. Stapleton says,<sup>1</sup> "He used to go through the back lanes, and inquire into the state of poor families; and he would relieve their distress, not by scattering a few small coins as is the general custom, but when he ascertained a real need, by two, three, or four gold pieces. When his official position and duties prevented this personal attention, he would send some of his family to dispense his alms, especially to the sick and aged. This office often fell to Margaret Giggs,<sup>2</sup> and it was especially at the time of the great feasts of the Church that these visitations were made. He very often invited to his table his poorer neigh-

<sup>1</sup> *Tres Thoma*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> It was thus from Blessed Thomas that she learnt that charity which gave her courage to visit and relieve the Carthusian martyrs in Newgate.

bours, receiving them, not condescendingly, but familiarly and joyously; he rarely invited the rich, and scarcely ever the nobility. In his parish of Chelsea he hired a house, in which he gathered many infirm, poor, and old people, and maintained them at his own expense." When More was away, his daughter Margaret had charge of this house. He even went so far as to receive into his own family and maintain a poor gentlewoman, a widow named Paula, who had expended all she had in an unsuccessful lawsuit. To widows and orphans, when he practised at the bar, he ever gave his services gratuitously.

The chapel which he built and furnished in the old parish church of Chelsea still remains, a precious relic of his zeal for God.<sup>1</sup> On the capitals of the columns may be traced his crest, a Moor's head. Gone, however, are the vessels of gold and silver, the hangings and vestments of silk and cloth of gold with which he furnished it most copiously. "The good give and the bad steal," he would say, and never had the saying a truer application than here. In this church he would put on a surplice and take his part with the choir, or serve the priest's Mass,<sup>2</sup> or even carry the cross at the head of the procession that went round the parish at Rogation-tide. We cannot omit the story, well known as it is, how the Duke of Norfolk found him, after he was Chancellor,

<sup>1</sup> It forms the south aisle of the nave.

<sup>2</sup> His parish priest, John Larke, is numbered among the Blessed martyrs.

singing in the parish choir. "God's body, God's body, my Lord Chancellor," he cried, as they went home arm-in-arm after the service. "What! a parish clerk—a parish clerk! You dishonour the King and his office." "Nay," quoth Sir Thomas More, smiling on the Duke, "your Grace may not think that the King, your master and mine, will be offended with me for serving God, his master, or thereby account his office dishonoured."

But the walls of his private oratory alone could tell the secrets of his hidden life. It is here that must be sought the source of that unfailing strength and independence of character, that unswerving fidelity to conscience, that absolute self-mastery, and withal that sunny mirth and radiant joyousness, that calm serenity of steadfast purpose which give him so unique a place in our affections, amid the multitude of God's saints. It was here that he would spend his Fridays in prayer and retirement, and it was here that his prayers won graces which those around him deemed miraculous. Thus when once his dearest daughter, Margaret, lay at the point of death, he went and shut himself up in his oratory till God gave him back this life that he prized far more than his own. It was here that his prayers won a still greater grace for that dear daughter's husband, as he himself has gratefully recorded. For soon after his marriage, having been carried away by some of Luther's writings, he fell into heresy, and became most obstinate in these new opinions. Nothing that Sir Thomas More could say would move him ;

for the young man, who had given up fasting and prayer and spent his time in reading a Lutheran Bible, was puffed up with his own conceit, and fancied himself a great Doctor.

“Until upon a time,” says Harpsfield, “that Sir Thomas More privately in his garden talked with his daughter Margaret, and amongst other his sayings said: ‘Meg, I have borne a long time with thy husband, I have reasoned and argued with him in these points of religion, and given to him my poor fatherly counsel; but I perceive none of all this able to call him home; and therefore, Meg, I will no longer argue or dispute with him, but will clean give him over, and get me to God, and pray for him.’ And soon after, as Roper verily believed, through the great mercy of God, at the devout prayers of Sir Thomas More, he perceived his own ignorance, oversight, malice, and folly, and turned him again to the Catholic faith, wherein (God be thanked) he hath hitherto continued, . . . yea, he hath been sithence by the goodness of God so stedfastly and firmly rooted and fixed in the Catholic faith, and all his children also, that a man may well say, *Hæc mutatio dexteræ Excelsi.*”

We have a glimpse into the yet more secret sanctuary of More's private life, in the letter of his confessor, Dom John Bouge, already referred to. He writes (in 1535) to Dame Kateryn Man, a penitent of his, as follows (I have modernized the marvellous spelling of the original):

"This was the answer [of] Mr. More, Knight, to Mr. Cromwell, when he came from the Tower toward his place of execution, this was his answer: 'I had rather put my life of body to suffer pain for a little season, than my silly [*i.e.*, innocent] soul to perish for ever.' . . . Item, as for Sir Thomas More, he was my parishioner at London. I christened him two goodly children. . . . This Mr. More was my ghostly child; in his confession [he used] to be so pure, so clean, with great study [*i.e.*, care], deliberation and devotion, I never heard many such. A gentleman of great learning both in law, art, and divinity, having no man like [him] now alive of a layman. Item, a gentleman of great soberness and gravity, once chief of the King's Council. Item, a gentleman of little refection and marvellous diet. He was devout in his divine service, and what [is] more—keep you this privily to yourself—he wore a great hair [shirt] next his skin, in so much that my mistress marvelled where his shirts were washed. Item, this mistress, his wife, desired me to counsel to put that hard and rough shirt of hair,<sup>1</sup> and yet it [was] very long, almost a twelvemonth, before she knew [of] this haburyon of hair, that tamed his flesh till the blood was seen in his clothes," &c.

We shall hear of Blessed Thomas's hair-shirt again, and need but add here that this solemn

<sup>1</sup> The meaning is obscure, but apparently Lady More asked the confessor to use his influence to make her husband "put off" the hair-shirt. *Haburyon* is a variant for *habergeon*, the diminutive of *hauberk*.



testimony of the martyr's confessor as to his purity of conscience and asceticism of life, is confirmed by every page of his religious works. We have already seen his great-grandson speak of the treatise he wrote on the Four Last Things, so early as 1522. This beautiful little meditation, which he unfortunately left unfinished, is based on the text, *Memorare novissima, et in æternum non peccabis*—"Remember the last thynges and thou shalt never synne." As one of his Protestant biographers says,<sup>1</sup> "The book which is almost unknown is well worthy to be reprinted; it is exceedingly interesting, not only as an illustration of the sincerity and beauty of More's character, but also as an example of the highest standard of Catholic devotion immediately before the Reformation. . . . The interest which attaches to the few pages lies not only in the quaint and peculiar style in which the deepest thoughts are with all sincerity expressed, but also in the period at which they were written. In 1522 More was on the point of making that choice between politics and literature which has come to so many great men at the crisis of their lives. He was already famous in Europe as a scholar, as a writer of brilliant epigrams, as the author of a book of which everyone was speaking. . . . More had already performed several important diplomatic missions, and was gradually more and more sought after by the King, whose offers he had at first steadily refused.

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 188. The little book has lately (1903) been edited for the *Paternoster Series* (Art and Book Co.) by Mr. Daniel O'Connor.

He had assisted him in his book against Luther;<sup>36</sup> he was probably already preparing his answer to that heretic, which was published in the next year. He was in almost daily correspondence with Wolsey. A great political career seemed open to him."

"It was at such a time that More deliberately turned his thoughts to the most solemn of all matters. *Memorare novissima, et in æternum non peccabis.*"

It was this thought of death and judgment which saved him from the manifold temptations which surrounded him, which helped him to pass unscathed through the furnace of this world's vanities, and to stand upright and unaffrighted when the cedars of Lebanon were laid low and the stars of heaven fell.

And thus in his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, written in the Tower, he revealed the secrets of his hidden life, in the form of advice as to the means by which a man may keep himself humble in a state of honour and prosperity.

"To the intent that he may think of such things (as death and judgment) the better, let him use often to resort to confession, and there open his heart, and by the mouth of some good virtuous ghostly father, have such things oft renewed in his remembrance. Let him also choose himself some secret, solitary place, as far from noise and company as he conveniently can, and thither let him sometimes secretly resort alone, imagining himself as one

going out of the world, even straight unto the giving up of his reckoning unto God of his sinful life. Then let him there before an altar, or some pitiful image of Christ's bitter Passion, kneel down or fall prostrate, as at the feet of Almighty God, verily believing Him to be there invisibly present, as without any doubt He is. There let him open his heart to God and confess his faults, such as he can call to mind, and pray God of forgiveness. Let him also call to remembrance the benefits that God hath given him, either in general among other men, or privately to himself, . . . and give Him humble, hearty thanks thereof. There let him declare unto God the temptations of the devil, the suggestions of the flesh, the occasions of the world and of his worldly friends—much worse many times in drawing a man from God than are his most mortal enemies. There let him bewail and lament unto God his own frailty, negligence, and sloth in resisting and withstanding of temptations, his readiness and pronity to fall thereunto. Then let him beseech God of His gracious aid and help to strengthen his infirmity withal, both in keeping him from falling, and when he by his own fault misfortuneth to fall, then with the helping hand of His merciful grace to lift him up and set him on his feet in the state of grace again. And let this man not doubt that God heareth him and granteth him gladly this boon; and so, dwelling in the faithful trust of God's help, he shall well use his prosperity and persevere in his good, profitable business, and shall have therein the truth of God to compass him about with a pavise

[shield] of His heavenly defence ; that of the devil's arrow flying on the day of worldly wrath he shall not need to dread."

We must now return to More's public life, and see how truly he put these precepts into practice.

He was advancing daily in Court favour. In 1523 his answer to Luther's foul-mouthed and virulent attack on the King's book was published. He had, as we know, a share at least in the revising of this famous book which won for Henry VIII. and his successors the title of Defender of the Faith. And so when Luther flung his reply in the King's face, More undertook to answer him, since it was beneath the royal dignity to take notice of the apostate. The reply, it must be owned, has something of the roughness of the day, but More complained that he could not clear the mouth of Luther without defiling his own fingers.<sup>1</sup> All this of course brought him still nearer to the King, and in July, 1525, at the death of Sir R. Wingfield, he was raised to the dignified and important office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, without however ceasing to be Sub-Treasurer.

He was drawn about this time into controversy with the heretics who, in sad imitation of Luther, were arising also in England. In March, 1527, he received a dispensation from Bishop Tunstall to read heretical books for the purpose of refutation, and the

<sup>1</sup> "A bantering rejoinder which, despite frequent lapses into vulgarity, embodied his most sacred convictions." (Brewer, i. 608, 609.)

Hanse merchants issued in the same month a printed circular announcing that Wolsey and More had forbidden the importation of Lutheran works into England.<sup>1</sup>

In 1528 More completed his *Dialogue*,<sup>2</sup> which was his first controversial book in English, and was mainly directed against Tindale's writings. "Henceforth with Tindale and his allies, Frith and George Joye, he waged unceasing battle till his death." Harpsfield calls attention to "the integrity and uprightness" of More's controversial writings. Far from wresting his opponents' words to their worst, and making their arguments appear feebler than they really are, he gives them full weight and sometimes even presses them further, and makes them stronger than their authors had done. And when he saw that he had done an opponent an injustice, he at once retracted it and altered the passage complained of, and this course he advised also to Erasmus and his other learned friends: "Whose counsel if Erasmus had followed he would have been better liked of our posterity," adds Harpsfield.

"It must in justice be admitted," says Mr.

<sup>1</sup> There is a copy in British Museum, c. 18. e. 7. (No. 94.)

<sup>2</sup> "A Dialogue of Sir Thomas More, Knighte, one of the Counsaill of our Sovereign Lorde the Kinge and Chancellour of his Duchy of Lancaster. Wherein be treated divers maters, as of the veneration and worship of ymages and relyques, prayng to Saintes, and goyng on pylgrimage. With many other thinges touchyng the pestilente secte of Luther and Tyndale by the tone bygone in Saxony and by the tother laboured to be brought into England. Made in the year of our Lord, 1528. First edition, 1529." (*English Works*, Edit. 1557, pp. 104—228.)

Hutton, "that the questions discussed are treated with ability and tact, and in a much more moderate tone than was usual in the controversies of the time. The method of the book was admirably chosen. It professes to be a dialogue on the great questions of the day between More and a messenger from one of his friends who was imbued with many of the opinions of the Reformers. The objections of the heretics are brought forward with some force, and are met with every artifice of ridicule and illustration as well as of sober argument."<sup>1</sup>

"It is plain," he continues, "that More was well aware of the strength of the Reformers, that he had clearly grasped many of their arguments and decisively rejected their whole teaching. . . . More's style was indeed the mirror of the man: he wrote as he lived, absolutely without ostentation, simply, merrily, honourably, and in the true faith and fear of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Such admissions from a Protestant writer are valuable: from a Catholic point of view the *Dialogue* is perhaps the greatest of our martyr's achievements. It is in four books, the first two defend the Church's doctrine and practice on the invocation of saints, pilgrimages, miracles and so on, and prove that she alone is the infallible interpreter of Holy Writ. In the third he attacks Tindale's translations of the New Testament as heretical and untrustworthy. He points out the heretical bias with which the Reformer has adopted new renderings of words for the purpose of concealing the meaning

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 210.

of the originals. Thus for "priest" he substituted "senior," for the "Church" the "Congregation;" "confession" became "knowledge," and "penance" "repentance." "He changeth 'grace' into 'favour,'<sup>1</sup> whereas every favour is not grace in English, for in some favour there is little grace. . . . 'A contrite heart' he changeth into 'a troubled heart,' and many more things like and many texts untruly translated for the maintenance of heresy."

Some of the "unco' guid" professed to be scandalized at the lightness of Sir Thomas's style, and it must be owned that his controversial works are full of amusing illustrations and merry tales, but he wittily rejoined: "As Horace saith, a man may sometimes say full sooth in game; and one that is but a layman as I am, it may better haply become him merrily to tell his mind than seriously and solemnly to preach. And over this, I can scant believe that 'the brethren' find any mirth in my books, for I have not much heard that they very merrily read them."

We can only briefly mention the martyr's other controversial writings, and must refer our readers to Father Bridgett, who gives a full and excellent account of them, illustrated by striking extracts; and to Dom Gasquet's *Eve of the Reformation*. In 1529 appeared an answer to Simon Fish's libellous pamphlet *Supplication for the Beggars*.<sup>2</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> "Hail thou that art highly favoured" is still the Anglican misrepresentation of *Ave gratia plena*.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in E.E.T.S. (Extra Series) 1871, edited by Dr. F. J. Furnivall.

scurrilous writer struck at the Church through the clergy, whom in language of extreme violence he accused of being "stordy lobies" and "holy idle thieves" and demanded that they should be "tied to the carts to be whipped naked through every market town till they will fall to labour." In reply More produced his beautiful and pathetic *Supplication of Souls*, in which he pleads in the name of the holy souls in Purgatory against the Protestants who sought to deprive them of the Masses and suffrages of the faithful, by abolishing the chantries and other pious foundations founded for their relief. Mr. Hutton admits that "in exposing the extravagant follies of such a work as that of Fish, More is at his best, clear, trenchant and exhaustive," and that he completely defeats his adversary. "There is a pathos worthy of the writer in the passage where the suffering souls plead their membership in the Catholic Church, their claim on the prayers of the faithful, and their right to the compassion which by their benefactions they had shown to those on earth."<sup>1</sup> It seems, however, somewhat strange to find the holy souls debating the law of mortmain, the value of the currency, and still more when they begin to relate merry tales and make jokes!<sup>2</sup>

In 1531 appeared Tindale's reply to the *Dialogue*, and in the following year appeared Sir Thomas's *Confutation of Tindale's answer*, or rather the first part of it. This, the most voluminous of all his works,<sup>3</sup> was written while he was

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 215.      <sup>2</sup> Fish recanted his errors before his death.

<sup>3</sup> It would fill three octavo volumes. (Bridgett.)



burdened with the immense cares of the Chancellorship. The first three books appeared in 1532, the second part, containing the next five in 1533, and the ninth book was first published in the collected edition of his English works. In the eighth book, More dealt with the writings of Robert Barnes.<sup>1</sup>

In the same year (1532) he wrote a short letter on the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament against a young man named Frith who had written against that august mystery. "It is pleasant to find him here writing in a tone of tender remonstrance rather than of indignant denunciation."<sup>2</sup> The letter consists of about a dozen folio pages. Also in 1532, after the resignation of the Chancellorship, More wrote his *Apology*, which is a defence of his former writings and an answer to a treatise called *The Pacifier*, written by a lawyer named Saint-German. The principal objections against his writings were their undue length and the opprobrious words he used against his opponents. It must be admitted that there was some ground for the first objection, but Sir Thomas, according to his wont, answers it very wittily.

"The most foolish heretic in the town may write more false heresies in one leaf than the wisest man in the whole world can well and conveniently by reason and authority confute in forty. But greatly can I not marvel, though these evangelical

<sup>1</sup> "It is interesting to notice that in the course of his arguments, More enunciates the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope." (Hutton, p. 225.)

<sup>2</sup> Hutton, *ibid.*

brethren think my works too long. For everything think they too long that aught is. Our Lady's psalter<sup>1</sup> think they too long by all the *Ave Marias* and some good piece of the Creed too. Then the Mass think they too long by the Secrets, and the Canon, and all the Collects wherein mention is made either of saints or souls. Instead of a long porteus,<sup>2</sup> a short primer shall serve them; and yet the primer think they too long by all our Lady's Matins. And the seven psalms think they long enough without the litany; and as for dirge or commemoration for their friends' souls, all that service think they too long by altogether."<sup>3</sup>

As to the charge against the freedom of speech, he owns he cannot "find good names for evil things," and cannot "call a fool but a fool, nor a heretic but a heretic." He then points out that Tindale and Barnes and their brethren were constantly pouring out the foulest abuse against the whole Catholic Church, which they "damned to the devil," and accused of foul idolatry for the last eight hundred years, yes, and blasphemed, "with villainous jests and railings, against all that good is, saints, ceremonies, service of God, the very sacraments and all, and most against the best, that is, to wit, the Precious Body and Blood of our Saviour Himself in the holy Sacrament of the Altar." As to their personal abuse of himself, More cared not a jot. "For the pleasant oil

<sup>1</sup> The rosary.

<sup>2</sup> Breviary.

<sup>3</sup> *English Works*, pp. 847. 848, apud Bridgett, p. 294, n.

of heretics cast upon mine head, can do my mind no pleasure but contrariwise, the worse that such folk write of me, for hatred that they bear to the Catholic Church and faith, the greater pleasure, as for my own part, they do me. . . . Howbeit utterly to match them herein I neither can though I would, nor will neither though I could; but am content, as I needs must, to give them therein the mastery, wherein to match them were more rebuke than honesty."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, as Mr. Hutton says: "It is easy for one who is not moved to preserve a calm balance of language; but to More the religious questions of the day were matters of life and death, and he could not restrain his fears for the result of the struggle."<sup>2</sup>

The main thesis of the *Apology*, as of More's following work,<sup>3</sup> is that heresy being a great crime against God and His Church deserved a severe punishment from the secular power; Saint-German ("the Pacifier," as he called himself, or "Sir John Somesay," as More styled him) having made a severe attack on the clergy for their treatment of this class of offenders.

<sup>1</sup> *English Works*, p. 865.

<sup>2</sup> Hutton, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1533), a rejoinder to Saint-German's reply to the *Apology*. In the same year appeared the last of his controversial works, an answer to a book called *The Supper of the Lord*, written either by Tindale, or, more probably, by George Jay or Joye. Only the first part appeared, which is in five books, and is mainly a Scriptural exposition of the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

And here it will be convenient to consider somewhat at length More's conduct towards heretics, as he was accused by Tindale, Foxe, and others, as having been a "bloody persecutor of the people of God." In our own day Mr. Froude has taken up the cry and re-echoed Burnet's charges against the man whom he presumes to call "a merciless bigot."

Such extravagant accusations may be left to refute themselves, but the more moderate indictment proposed by Mr. Sidney Lee,<sup>1</sup> is not unworthy of consideration. Mr. Lee has enumerated the events of More's life with great conciseness, completeness and accuracy, and as a chronicler he has been frequently followed in these pages. But it is in no friendly spirit that he describes More as a judge of heretics. For though he does not believe all that Foxe and Tindale wrote against our martyr, when this is refuted by other evidence on other occasions, and especially in those mentioned below, he does not hesitate to prefer their word to More's. Even so, the indictment is not very severe.

"More admitted [in his *Apology*] that he had caused the officers of the Marshalsea and other prisons to use with severity persons guilty of what he deemed to be sacrilege, and that he had kept heretics in safe custody at Chelsea. But in only two cases did he admit that he had recommended corporal punishment: he had caused a boy

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 436.

in his service, who taught heresy to a fellow-servant, to be whipped, and a madman, who brawled in churches and had been committed to a mad-house, was tied to a tree and beaten into orthodoxy by his orders.<sup>1</sup> He is known to have personally searched for heretical books the house of John Petit, a friend of his in the city, and committed him to prison, where he soon died, before any distinct charge had been formulated against him.<sup>2</sup> Of John Tewkesbury, an inoffensive leather-seller, of London, who was burnt on December 20, 1531, More wrote: 'There was never a wretch, I wene, better worthy,'<sup>3</sup> and the enormities practised in the case of James Bainham must be largely laid to More's charge."

Here ✓ Before going further, let us recall the principles on which Sir Thomas acted. In the first place we should notice that what he hated was the heresy itself, not the persons of its professors, "and very fain would I that the one were destroyed and the other saved." Next we see that he fully approved of the laws, both ecclesiastical and civil, which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *English Works*, p. 901. Mr. Gairdner says that More himself states "the boy had previously been placed in the service of an immoral priest, and had begun to corrupt another child with the lessons that he had unhappily learned there." And the madman had committed "acts of the grossest indecency in church," of which More's neighbours had complained to him. This puts a very different complexion on the charges. (*A History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 132.)

<sup>2</sup> Nichols, *Narrative of the Reformation*, Camden Soc. pp. 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> *English Works*, p. 348; Foxe, iv. 688, seq. Cf. *Letters and Papers*, vi. p. 448.

then existed in England against heresy, and he maintained in his *Apology* that these laws had been administered with the utmost leniency, and indeed with a dangerous laxity. He looked upon the Lutheran doctrines with indignation and horror, as tending to the denial of everything that Christians hold most dear and sacred, and to the uprooting of the very bases of morality. He was the chief magistrate of a Catholic country hitherto in perfect peace and unity in matters of religion. His acute mind foresaw the utter confusion and misery which would overwhelm "Our Lady's Dowry" if heresy were allowed to spread unchecked. The miserable state of Germany, plunged into civil and religious anarchy, devastated by the excesses of the so-called Reformers, was an object-lesson which made him shudder. As to the punishments enacted by the State against hardened and relapsed heretics, More says that "it was the violent cruelty first used by the heretics themselves against good Catholic folk that drove good princes thereto, for preservation not of the faith only, but also of peace among the people." He enters fully into the history of the treatment of heretics. The Church, he maintains, had in no age punished them by death. The State had done it in self-defence, and had called on the Church to define heresy, to judge the fact and deliver the relapsed heretic into the hands of the civil power. The State (he maintains) only did this when it had attained peace and unity by means of the Church, and when it was found by experience that heretics ever stirred up sedition

and rebellion, and if allowed to spread brought about division and ruin.<sup>1</sup>

Such were More's theories. What was his personal practice? The charges brought against him rest mainly on the authority of Foxe, a universally discredited witness, who wrote thirty years after Sir Thomas's martyrdom. Foxe has been proved to have mixed up together the cases of Tewkesbury and Bainham, and the story of their torture in More's garden has been denied beforehand by the martyr himself, whom we prefer to believe rather than a proved liar such as Foxe. In his *Apology* Sir Thomas refers to some such lies then in circulation. "Divers of them have said that of such as were in my house while I was Chancellor, I used to examine them with torments, caused them to be bound to a tree in my garden and there piteously beaten. . . . What cannot these brethren say, that can be so shameless as to say thus?"

In crediting such witnesses Mr. Lee is not fair to the martyr. He speaks of his punishing with severity "what he deemed to be sacrilege," whilst what More refers to is "a great robbery or a heinous murder, or sacrilege in a church, with carrying away the pix with the Blessed Sacrament, or villainously casting it out." We cannot well expect a non-Catholic to realize the horror and indignation which fill the soul of the Catholic at such outrages against the Sacrament of Love, but still all must agree that such a crime was no

<sup>1</sup> Bridgett, pp. 263, 264. The whole chapter should be carefully read.

mere case of theoretical false doctrine, but one that really deserved punishment. That a boy should get a good whipping for trying to corrupt another, or that a madman who had committed acts of gross indecency during public service should suffer a like penalty, may shock some of our hypersensitive humanitarians, but sensible people will probably agree with Sir Thomas. In any case, we thoroughly believe his solemn asseveration, when after recounting these cases, he declares: "And of all that ever came in my hand for heresy, as help me God, saving (as I said) the sure keeping of them, had never any of them any stripe or stroke given them, so much as a fillip on the forehead."<sup>1</sup>

As Sir James Mackintosh says, such a public defence made after his fall from power, challenged denial, and would have been rather a proof of insanity than of imprudence, if the facts had not been indisputably and confessedly true,<sup>2</sup> and his latest Protestant biographer has shown that "not only did he keep strictly within the limits of his duty, and do no more than he was legally bound to do, but that he took especial pains—and for

<sup>1</sup> *English Works*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of More*, p. 101. The holy martyr's defence has lately been taken up by Mr. Gairdner in his *History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century from Henry VIII. to Elizabeth*, already referred to. In discussing the charges he writes: "More was undoubtedly a great enemy to heretics. . . . He considered them dangerous to society, as indeed they were to the whole framework of society in those days; and it is hard to deny that the break-up of that old framework after his death was extremely demoralizing, first to the national life of England, and afterwards to the whole Christian life



some time successfully—to avoid the infliction of the extreme penalty.”<sup>1</sup>

“The law provided,” he proceeds to explain, “that if a heretic, arrested and examined by the Bishops, refused to recant, he should be burnt. The decision once made and sentence passed, the end could not be avoided. But by the proclamation of 1529, power was given to the Bishops to imprison, at their discretion, both before and after conviction. Thus, to More in the execution of his office, the only escape from his clear legal obligation to destroy the heretics was by advising the Bishops to use the power committed to them. By the exercise of this power many were saved who must otherwise have been burnt; and there can be little doubt that those whose petitions to the Crown after More’s resignation have caused much of the blame that has been attached to him would, but for his intervention, have suffered death.”

“It was not till within the last nine months of his tenure of the seals that any execution took place. Bilney, Bayfield, Tewkesbury, and Bainham, who had previously abjured, relapsed into heresy.

of Europe. But More gave effect to his enmity in methods strictly legitimate, and nothing that he ever did was tainted with inhumanity. The charges, indeed, have been repeated again and again, though they rest on no better authority, after all, than the malice of some contemporaries, and the credulity of a very one-sided historian. But if they be accepted they destroy More’s character, not for humanity alone, but for honesty and truthfulness as well. For we must not overlook his own very explicit statement in answer to these libels.” (p. 131.)

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 217.

In such cases the law was explicit. The Chancellor had no power to save, . . . and he can with no more justice be considered responsible for the law he carried out than the many judges who in this century condemned men to death for forgery and theft. He is thus without doubt legally absolved. The stories of his cruelty to these prisoners rest only on the unreliable assertions of Foxe."

To sum up, with Father Bridgett: "He held strongly that the dogmatizing heretics of those days, in the then circumstances of England and Christendom, should be forcibly repressed, and if necessary punished even by death, according to the existing laws. Yet in the administration of those laws he was not only rigidly upright, but as tender and merciful as is compatible with the character and office of a judge. 'What other controversialist can be named,' asks Sir James Mackintosh, 'who having the power to crush antagonists whom he viewed as the disturbers of the quiet of his own declining years, *the destroyers of all the hopes which he had cherished for mankind*, contented himself with severity of language?'"<sup>1</sup>

The clergy naturally felt great gratitude to Sir Thomas for his writings in defence of the faith, and they determined to express their gratitude in a practical way. Knowing that he was a comparatively poor man (as he had ever consistently refused to take advantage of the opportunities of enriching himself which his high position and

<sup>1</sup> Bridgett, pp. 271, 272.

the King's favour afforded him), they determined in Convocation to make him a present of a sum of at least four or five thousand pounds, which they had raised by voluntary contributions.

“Whereupon,” says Roper, “Doctor Tunstall, of Durham, Clarke, Bishop of Bath, and, as far as I can call to mind Vasty,<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Exeter, repaired unto him declaring how much thankful they were for his travails to their discharge in God's cause bestowed, for which they reckoned themselves bounden to consider him. And that albeit they could not to his deserts so worthily as they would requite him therefore, but must refer that only to the goodness of God, yet for a small part of that recompense in respect of his estate, so unequal to his worthiness, in the name of their Convocation they presented unto him that sum which they desired him to take in good part. Who forsaking it, said, that like as it was no small comfort unto him that so wise and learned men so well accepted his simple doings, for which he never intended to receive a reward but at the hands of God only, to whom was the thank thereof chiefly to be ascribed: so gave he most humble thanks unto their Honours all for their so bountiful and friendly consideration. When they, for all their importunate pressing upon him (that few would have thought he could have refused) could by no means make him to take it, then besought they him that he would yet be

<sup>1</sup> Veysey.

contented that they might bestow it on his wife and children. 'Not so, my Lords,' quoth he, 'I had rather see it cast in the Thames than either I or any of mine should have thereof the worth of a penny. For although your offer, my Lords, be indeed very friendly and honourable, yet set I so little by my profit, and so much by my pleasure, that I would not, in good faith, have lost the watching of so many nights for much more than your liberal offer. And yet wish would I for all that, upon condition that all heresies were suppressed, that all my books were burned and my labour lost.' Thus departing were they fain to restore to every man his own again."<sup>1</sup>

More was indeed as incorruptible as he was fearless.

"Far more," writes Canon Dixon,<sup>2</sup> "than the prison and the stake his enemies dreaded the caustic scorn which refuted their cavillations, unmasked their motives, and not unfrequently exposed their characters. The boldest of them only uttered with bated breath the ready imputation that the champion of the Catholic Faith was the hireling of the Bishops. His spotless integrity was proved by the poverty into which he retired after innumerable opportunities of enriching himself amid the universal example of corruption."

We must now turn once more to our martyr's public life, and witness him generously suffering

<sup>1</sup> Roper, pp. 60—62.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Church of England*, i. p. 142.

for the faith which he had hitherto defended so successfully.

In 1527 he accompanied Wolsey on an embassy to France, leaving London on Wednesday, July the 3rd. Thursday night was spent at the Bishop of Rochester's palace. "We know," writes Father Bridgett, "of the long interview in which Wolsey tried to over-reach the holy Bishop with regard to the question of the King's marriage,<sup>1</sup> which had just then been secretly mooted before the two Archbishops, but we have no record of the cordial embraces between Fisher and More, the two loving friends so soon to be brother-martyrs. Their conversation would have been about the captivity and danger of the Holy Father Clement VII., then besieged in his Castle of St. Angelo, while Rome was given up to the most cruel and brutal outrages ever recorded in history. Before leaving home More had gone with his family to take part in the solemn supplications for the Pope in his parish church. On leaving Rochester he joined Wolsey and Warham in the Cathedral Church of Canterbury in similar devotions."<sup>2</sup>

More did not return from his embassy till September. In July, 1529, he again crossed the Channel, this time in company with Tunstall, then Bishop of London, in order to sign the Treaty of Cambray.

It was before going to France with Wolsey, in

<sup>1</sup> He pretended that the matter had been first suggested by the Bishop of Tarbes.

<sup>2</sup> Bridgett, p. 201.

1527, that the King first mentioned to his favourite the question of the divorce. Into this much vexed question it is fortunately unnecessary here to enter in detail. Suffice it to say, that More's early biographers are known to have been mistaken in ascribing the blame of originating the idea to Cardinal Wolsey. It is also untrue that the first notion of it was suggested to the King by a doubt thrown out by the French Ambassador, the Bishop of Tarbes, as to the legitimacy of Princess Mary, although Henry and Wolsey afterwards conspired to throw the blame upon him. We now have fuller means of information open to us than had even contemporary historians, and we know that the idea sprang up in the heart of Henry himself, and was prompted more by his evil passion for Anne Boleyn than by the more avowable desire of securing a successor for the throne.<sup>1</sup> Wolsey was certainly greatly to blame in that he encouraged the idea, with the view of revenging himself on the Emperor, who had disappointed his hopes of gaining the Papal throne, and of throwing his royal master into the arms of France. He found out too late that Henry's passion for Anne was no transient amour, and that the fatal result of his policy would be his own overthrow as well as that of the Papal Supremacy. His frantic diplomatic efforts to save England to the Holy See, by forcing the Pope to grant the divorce proved, as we know, utterly unavailing, and the great Cardinal lived

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortoy, pp. 157, 158, note and 159, note, where all the authorities are quoted.

to utterly rue the day on which he entered into this dark and dishonouring intrigue against a defenceless woman.<sup>1</sup>

More seems not to have fully understood the matter when the King first broached it, but to have been deceived by his master's hypocritical pretence of an anxious conscience, and to have thought that some difficulty had been raised by outsiders as to the wording of the Bull of dispensation.<sup>2</sup> He was therefore surprised, when on his return in September, the King suddenly mooted the question again as they were walking in the gallery at Hampton Court, and told him that he had found his marriage was in such wise contrary to the divine law, "that it could in no wise by the Church be dispensable."<sup>3</sup> He "sore pressed" More for an answer, laying the Bible open before him, and reading him the passages

<sup>1</sup> Wolsey may have had real doubts as to the power of the Pope to dispense an impediment of affinity in the first degree. Fisher himself admits that there was a great difference of opinion among theologians as to whether such a marriage were not prohibited by the divine law: and Julius II., before granting Henry the dispensation to marry Catherine, discussed the matter seriously with his Cardinals. But this does not justify Wolsey's conduct; he should have resigned his post.

<sup>2</sup> See his letter to Cromwell, March 5, 1534.

<sup>3</sup> Henry at this very time was living on the most intimate terms with Anne at Richmond, and it was in her presence, in defiance of all etiquette, that Wolsey had to expose the results of his mission. (Friedmann, *Anne Boleyn*, i. pp. 58, 59.) At this time too he was writing love-letters to her in which he complained that she had made him languish with desire for more than a year. She appeared first at the English Court in 1522. (Cf. Ehses, *Die päpstliche Decretale in dem Scheidungs-Prozesse Heinrichs VIII.* pp. 223, et seq.)

in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*. After excusing himself as long as he could, Sir Thomas at last agreed to confer with the Bishops of Durham and Bath, and taking with him the passages from Scripture, with which the King had supported his argument, compared them with "the exposition of divers of the old doctors." On returning to the King he told him plainly that neither the Bishops nor himself were meet counsellors in a matter of such importance, inasmuch as they were his own servants and bound to him by so many obligations of gratitude, and that he should rather take counsel from those who would not be inclined from human fear or respect to deceive him, such as the old Catholic Doctors St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the rest. The King was not over-pleased, but in the end he took the reply in good part, and still continued to confer with Sir Thomas on the matter.

The blessed martyr however already clearly foresaw the terrible and far-reaching consequences of this unhappy business.

"It fortun'd," says Roper, "before the matter of the said matrimony [was] brought to question, when I in talk with Sir Thomas More (of a certain joy) commended unto him the happy estate of this realm, that had so Catholic a prince that no heretic durst show his face, so virtuous and learned a clergy, so grave and sound a nobility, and so loving obedient subjects all in one faith agreeing together, 'Troth it is indeed, son Roper,' quoth he, and in all degrees and estates of the same went far beyond me in



commendation thereof, 'and yet, son Roper, I pray God,' said he, 'that some of us as high as we seem to sit upon the mountains treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we would gladly be at league and composition with them to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly to ourselves.' After that I had told him many considerations why he had no cause to say so, 'Well,' said he, 'I pray God, son Roper, some of us live not till that day,' showing me no reason why he should put any doubt therein. To whom I said, 'By my troth, sir, it is very desperately spoken' (that vile term, I cry God mercy, did I give him). Who by these words, perceiving me in a fume said merrily unto me, 'It shall not be so. It shall not be so.'"<sup>1</sup>

Again Roper tells us, that "on a time walking along the Thames side at Chelsea, in talking of other things, he said to me: 'Now would to our Lord, son Roper, upon condition that three things were well established in Christendom, I were put in a sack and here presently cast into the Thames.' 'What great things be those, sir,' quoth I, 'that you should so wish?' 'Wouldst thou know, son Roper, what they are?' quoth he. 'Yea marry, with a good-will, sir, if it please you,' quoth I. 'In faith, son, they be these,' quoth he. 'The first is, that

<sup>1</sup> Roper, pp. 51, 52. He adds the significant testimony that all the sixteen years he had lived in More's house, he had never once known him to be in a passion.

whereas the most part of Christian princes be at mortal wars, they were all at universal peace. The second, that where the Church of Christ is at this present sore afflicted with many errors and heresies, it were settled in perfect uniformity of religion. The third, that where the matter of the King's marriage is now come in question it were to the glory of God and quietness of all parties brought to a good conclusion.' Whereby, as I could gather, he judged that otherwise it would be a disturbance to a great part of Christendom. Thus did it, by his doings throughout the whole course of his life appear, that all his travails and pains, without respect of earthly commodities either to himself or any of his, were only upon the service of God, the prince and his realm wholly bestowed and employed, whom I heard in his latter time to say that he never asked of the King for himself the value of a penny."<sup>1</sup>

Wolsey now approached his fall. At the Council held as usual to prepare business for Parliament, the King had treated him with contempt, yet the Cardinal clung to office. But on the 19th of October, 1529, he was forced to resign the great seal, and three days later it was transferred to Sir Thomas More.

His appointment as Lord High Chancellor of England marked an epoch in the public history of this country. Hitherto the holders of that exalted office had, with very few exceptions, been eccle-

<sup>1</sup> Roper, pp. 43, 44.

siastics; henceforth they were to be, with equally few exceptions, laymen. On Tuesday, October 26, 1529, More took the oaths in the great hall at Westminster in presence of the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and many laymen. The appointment was received with the greatest rejoicings on all sides, and even Wolsey in his misery declared that there was no man in England so worthy of it. He made a speech, characteristically modest, in which he declared himself unfit for such a post, especially to succeed so great a prelate, whose fall warned him not to rejoice overmuch in his own elevation. As to the praises which the Duke of Norfolk had lavished on him, in the King's name, for his virtues and services, they were far above his deserts, for he had only done his duty.<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus wrote, on hearing the news: "I do indeed congratulate England, for a better or holier judge could not have been appointed."<sup>2</sup> But Henry made it plain that More's political power was to be very limited; the general direction of affairs was mainly in the hands of the Duke of Norfolk, the President of the Council. "According to Cardinal Pole, More owed his elevation to the King's desire

<sup>1</sup> This is the substance of what passed according to Roper, who confesses that the speeches made on the occasion were "not in his memory." Stapleton has composed two, which must be considered imaginary, as must the account of Hall the chronicler, who accuses More of having attacked his fallen predecessor, an ungenerous act alien to his character. Mr. Hutton points out that the last rests wholly on Hall's authority, and Hall was a bitter partizan.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistolæ*, 1034.

to win his support in the proceedings he had begun for his divorce from Queen Catherine. But More never swerved in his devotion to the Papacy, which had championed her cause. 'He is,' wrote Chapuys, at the time of his promotion, 'an upright and learned man and a good servant of the Queen.'"<sup>1</sup>

"That his greatness was thrust upon him, no one who knows anything of his character can doubt. Long before, he had seen the nature of the King's confidence, and it can hardly be doubted that he foresaw, if not the circumstances, yet certainly the result of his taking office. His onward path was no 'blindfold walking;' he well knew that 'behind him stalked the headsman.' His acceptance of the great seal, rightly estimated, seems one of the noblest and most conscientious acts of a noble and conscientious life."<sup>2</sup>

His first duty as Chancellor was to open the new Parliament, at Blackfriars, on November 3, 1529. This was that Parliament which has been truly described as "the most memorable that ever sat. It was the assembly which transformed old England—the England of Chaucer and Lydgate—into modern England."<sup>3</sup> One by one, it was to cut the ties which bound England to the See of Rome, and leave her to drift into schism and heresy. But though More was charged to announce that it was summoned "to reform such things as had been

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 434, from *Letters and Papers*, iv. n. 6026.

<sup>2</sup> Hutton, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, i. p. 2.

used or permitted by inadvertence or by changes of time had become expedient," even his prophetic eye could not foresee the sweeping nature of the revolution which it was destined to effect.

Needless to say, that the Chancellor had no share in penning the Royal proclamation which ordered the clergy to acknowledge Henry Supreme Head of the Church (February 11, 1530-1).

On the contrary, according to Chapuys, he proffered his resignation as soon as he heard of the King's usurpation of a title hitherto reserved to the Pope.<sup>1</sup> But the King had hopes of More, and he remained in office. He still pressed him to reconsider his "great matter," and Sir Thomas again obediently undertook an examination of the distasteful subject. He studied the matter most attentively, taking for his instructors or advisers those whom the King selected, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (Warham and Lee), the almoner Dr. Fox, and Dr. Nicholas de Burgo, an Italian friar. But in spite of his desire to serve his royal master, he could not bring his conscience to assent to the King's views, and on his humbly declaring this, his Majesty was pleased to leave him free from any participation in the affair, and allow him to employ himself in other business. He thenceforward studiously refrained from discussing the matter, and refused to read books on either side.

In March, 1531, he had to announce to Parliament the opinions of the Universities respecting

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, v. n. 112.

the divorce, but refused to express his own private opinion. When the bill to suspend the payment of Annates (or first-fruits of bishoprics) to the Papacy was brought into Parliament, More brought his influence to bear against the bill, and vigorously opposed it in Council<sup>1</sup> (May 13, 1532).

He also opposed the King's proposal that the laws against heresy should be relaxed.<sup>2</sup> The King showed signs of anger, and More, perceiving his position to be impossible, resigned his office three days later, in the gardens of York Place. He had held it little more than two years and a half.

It is needless here to dwell in detail on the way he had fulfilled his duties as judge, especially as no authentic account of any case tried before him has yet been brought to light. We know, however, from various anecdotes, that he "displayed his never-failing integrity, reason, learning, and eloquence."<sup>3</sup> He sat every afternoon "in his open hall to the intent that if any person had any suit unto him they might the more boldly come unto his presence, and there lay open complaints before him. . . . Whensoever he passed through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery by the Court of the King's Bench, if his father (being one of the Judges thereof) had been sat ere he came, he would go into the same court, and there reverently

<sup>1</sup> This bill was professedly passed in the interest of the clergy, but the "Supreme Head" soon showed his true solicitude for their welfare, by annexing for his own benefit, not only the first-fruits of bishoprics, but those of all ecclesiastical benefices!

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Spanish Calendar*, iv. i. 446.

<sup>3</sup> Sir James Mackintosh, *Life of More*, p. 125.

kneeling down in the sight of them all, duly ask his father's blessing."<sup>1</sup>

So indefatigable was he in the exercise of his office that on one occasion, when he called for the next case, he was answered that the list was exhausted. He ordered the fact to be put on record, "and deservedly so," says one of his modern biographers, "as it is probably the only miracle of the kind mankind will ever witness."<sup>2</sup> Even the judges who had once complained of some of his "injunctions," were forced, after receiving his explanations, to confess that they in his place could not have acted otherwise. These injunctions were issued in favour of people whom he considered to have been injured by a too harsh interpretation of the law.

His integrity was above reproach. He decided a case in Chancery against his son-in-law, the Venerable Giles Heron,<sup>3</sup> and refuted those of his enemies who ventured to accuse him of accepting bribes as triumphantly as St. Athanasius repelled the accusations of his Arian foes. He retired from office with a light-hearted glee which amazed even his family. His way of announcing to them this serious change in their fortunes was specially characteristic. It was the custom for one of his gentlemen to go to his wife's pew in Chelsea Church on festival-days when Mass was over, and making an obeisance as he opened the pew-door, say to

<sup>1</sup> Roper, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Walter, *Life of More*, apud Hutton, p. 177. Cf. Goodman, *Court of James I.* (edit. Brewer, 1839), i. p. 277.

<sup>3</sup> Martyred at Tyburn, 4 August, 1540.

her, "Madam, my lord is gone." So on the next holy-day, after his surrender of office, he came himself to the pew-door, and made the usual announcement: "Madam, my lord is gone." The poor lady took it for one of his usual jokes, till he told her the truth seriously, when she was by no means pleased. Indeed it was a serious matter for the family, for it meant a loss of income that could ill be spared. Sir Thomas had lost his professional income and had to depend on no more than £50 a year, independent of grants from the Crown. It was impossible of course to maintain his former household. He found his dependents good positions, though they declared with tears in their eyes they would rather serve him for nothing than others for high salaries. His barge and eight watermen he gave to his successor, Sir Thomas Audley; his fool to the Lord Mayor. Then calling his children together, he told them how poor he had become, and asked their advice as how they could best contrive to continue to live together, since he could no longer bear the expense of all.

When they remained silent and sorrowful, he said gaily: "Then will I show my poor mind to you. I have been brought up at Oxford, at an Inn of Chancery, at Lincoln's Inn, and also in the King's Court, and so from the least degree to the highest, and yet have I in yearly revenues at this present left me a little above a hundred pounds by the year. So that now must we hereafter, if we like to live together, be contented to become contributors



together. But by my counsel it shall not be best for us to fall to the lowest fare first. We will not therefore descend to Oxford fare, nor to the fare of New Inn, but we will begin with Lincoln's Inn diet, where many right worshipful and of good years do live full well, which if we find not ourselves able the first year to maintain, then will we next year after go one step down to New Inn fare, wherewith many a honest man is well contented. If that exceed our ability too, then will we the next year after descend to Oxford fare, where many grave, ancient, and learned fathers be conversant continually; which if our ability stretch not to maintain neither, then may we yet with bags and wallets go a-begging together, and hoping for pity some good folk will give their charity, at every man's door to sing *Salve Regina*, and so keep company merrily together."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed the poverty which faced them, though so cheerfully borne, was no mere reduction of superfluities or luxuries. Harpsfield tells us that, "He was not able for the maintenance of himself and such as necessarily belonged to him, sufficiently to find meat, drink, fuel, apparel, and such other necessary things; but was enforced and compelled for lack of other fuel, every night before he went to bed, to cause a great burden of ferns to be brought unto his own chamber, and with the blaze thereof to warm himself, his wife and his children, and so without any other fire to go to their beds."

It was thus the martyr cheerfully embraced

<sup>1</sup> Roper, p. 66.

suffering and privation for conscience' sake, and we are now about to follow him as he mounts further and loftier heights of self-sacrifice and abnegation, until he reaches the summit of his Calvary.

He lived for some time in complete retirement, engaged mainly on his controversial writing against the heretics. But his enemies were sleepless, and were only waiting for a good opportunity to bring about his ruin. He could not go to Court, where Anne Boleyn reigned supreme, and he refused to attend her coronation (June 1, 1533), in spite of the friendly entreaties of Bishops Gardiner, Clerk, and Tunstall, lest, as he told them, he should stain the virginity of his soul. Yet he took care to avoid any open rupture with the authorities, and only asked to be left in peace. But both Cromwell and his master resented More's neutrality, and Cromwell awaited an opportunity of extorting a direct expression of opinion on the all-absorbing topic.

Attempts were made to ruin him by bringing accusations of corruption against his conduct as Chancellor, but these signally failed. No less completely were his enemies foiled when they tried to convict him of writing a book which had been published by his nephew, William Rastall, defending the Pope against the King. But an opportunity better suited to their malice was afforded by the case of the "Holy Maid of Kent." This was a Benedictine nun named Elizabeth Barton, who was believed by many to be favoured with divine revelations and endowed with the spirit of prophecy.

She had become the instrument of others in attacking the King's proceedings, and throughout the year 1533 she had been prophesying his downfall if he persisted in the divorce. She was supported by certain religious (among them some Benedictines of Christ Church, Canterbury, and Observant Friars), and many eminent and holy people believed in her. When she and her principal supporters were arrested at the end of 1533, More was found to have had some connection with her, and this was eagerly seized upon as a pretext for his ruin. In March, 1534, More wrote Cromwell a long letter completely clearing himself from the charge of having been a disciple or supporter of the nun. He had had one interview with her at Syon House, at the request of the Fathers of that abbey, in which he was impressed by her religious fervour and recommended himself to her prayers, though at the same time he was careful to warn her against meddling with politics.

When at length the nun made her confession of hypocrisy<sup>1</sup> at Paul's Cross, More gave her up. He speaks of her as "a wicked woman" and "a false deceiving hypocrite," and tells Cromwell that he had done a very meritorious deed in exposing her.

This candid explanation by no means satisfied Cromwell or the King: and when the bill of

<sup>1</sup> It must, however, be remembered that all we know against the nun is derived from her published confessions, which are, of course, inconclusive in point of evidence. But More had the right to assume that they were trustworthy, especially when writing to Cromwell.

attainder against the nun and her adherents was introduced into the House of Lords, it was found that, in flagrant defiance of all justice, More's name figured in it as guilty of misprision of treason, and the Lords also, knowing his innocence, petitioned to hear him (February 21, 1533). He applied for permission to plead his cause before the House, but this would not have suited Henry's purpose, and he directed a small Commission, consisting of Cranmer, Norfolk, Audley, and Cromwell, to examine the ex-Chancellor. But when in their presence he found he had to meet another and still graver issue. They asked him why he had declined to acknowledge the wisdom and necessity of Henry's recent attitude to the Apostolic See. They taxed him with the basest ingratitude to his Sovereign, "inasmuch as he had most unnaturally provoked the King to put forth his book on the Seven Sacraments and maintaining of the Pope's authority, and had thus caused him, to his dishonour throughout all Christendom, to put a sword in the Pope's hand to fight against himself."

It can well be imagined that that unlucky book was a sharp thorn in the royal side, but the baseness of laying the blame for it on Sir Thomas, moved him to amazement, well as he knew the King. He had no difficulty in showing that, far from urging his Royal master to write it, he had simply read it through and revised it after it was finished. "Wherein," he went on, "when I found the Pope's authority highly advanced, and with strong arguments mightily defended, I said unto his Grace:

‘I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing, and that is this—the Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with other Christian princes. It may so hereafter fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some point of leagues, whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best, therefore, that that place be amended, and his authority more slenderly touched.’ ‘Nay,’ quoth his Grace, ‘that it shall not. We are so much bounden to the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honour to it.’ Then did I farther put him in remembrance of the statute of Præmunire, whereby a good part of the Pope’s pastoral care here was pared away. To that answered his Highness: ‘Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost, for we receive from that See our crown imperial;’ which I never heard of before, till his Grace told it me with his own mouth. And thus displeasantly departed they.”

“Then took Sir Thomas More his boat towards Chelsea, wherein the way he was very merry, and for that,” Roper continues,<sup>1</sup> “I was nothing sorry, hoping that he had got himself discharged out of the Parliament bill. When he was landed and come home, then walked we twain alone in his garden together, where I, desirous to know how he had sped, said, ‘I trust, sir, that all is well because

<sup>1</sup> P. 78.

you are so merry?' 'It is so indeed, son Roper, I thank God,' quoth he. 'Are you then put out of the bill?' quoth I. 'By my troth, son Roper, I never remembered it!' 'Never remembered it!' said I; 'a cause that toucheth yourself too near, and us all for your sake, I am sorry to hear it, for I verily trusted when I saw you so merry, that all had been well.' . . . Then said he: 'Wilt thou know, son Roper, why I was so merry? In good faith I rejoiced that I had given the devil a foul fall, and that with those lords I had gone so far as, without great shame, I could never go back again.' At which words waxed I very sad, for though himself liked it well, yet liked it me but a little."

The King was determined to proceed to the uttermost against his old friend, and it was not till the Lord Chancellor and his fellow-commissioners went on their knees and besought him to give up his purpose, that he was induced reluctantly to await a more fitting occasion for glutting his vengeance. It was represented to him that More's popularity was so great that the Lords could not be induced to pass the bill against him without at least hearing him in his own defence, and that the King might thus expose himself to suffer an affront, and this needlessly, for they doubted not to find in time a better occasion against him.

Cromwell meeting Roper in the Parliament House, told him the good news, and he hastened to send the message by his servant to his wife at Chelsea. But when Blessed Thomas was told,

he only said: "*Meg, Quod differtur non aufertur:*" and when his old friend the Duke of Norfolk warned him, not long after, that it was "perilous striving with princes, for *indignatio principis mors est,*" the future martyr calmly replied: "Is that all, my lord? then, in good faith, between your Grace and me is but this, that I shall die to-day and you to-morrow."

More thought well to write to Cromwell, on his return from the Council, putting on record his attitude as regards the three points on which he had been called in question: the nun, the divorce, and Papal Supremacy.<sup>1</sup> With the last only need we concern ourselves here. He repeats that until he examined the King's book, he was doubtful whether the primacy of the Apostolic See were "begun by the institution of God." Then he carefully examined into the matter for himself, and during a course of study that lasted ten years, he says: "I found, in effect, the substance of all the holy doctors from St. Ignatius, disciple to St. John the Evangelist, unto our own days, both Latins and Greeks, so consonant and agreeing in that point, and the thing by such General Councils so confirmed also, that in good faith I never read nor heard anything of such effect on the other side that ever could lead me to think that my conscience were well discharged, but rather in right great peril, if I should follow the other side, and deny the primacy to be provided by God."

Note that More does not say that he ever once

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Appendix. Roper, p. 111.

hesitated over the question whether the Pope was primate; nor did he doubt that belief in Papal primacy was a matter of obligation. What he was once uncertain about, when stated in his own words, was whether this supremacy was "provided of God," or whether it was "at the leastwise instituted by the corps of Christendom" (*i.e.*, by the whole Church). To use modern technical words, until he looked into the matter he was not sure whether the Pope's supremacy was *de jure divino*, or *de jure ecclesiastico*. Several non-Catholic writers have interpreted More's words, as though they signified that he was uncertain about the reality or the validity of the primacy, even as a matter of Church law. This was certainly very far indeed from his meaning. He never doubted it, any more than he doubted the kingship of Henry VIII. over England.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that More's doubt, even when rightly apprehended, will still seem strange to us. But it must be remembered that the Great Schism had confused men's minds and that Gallican theories were much in vogue. Erasmus notes that he doubted sometimes whether the *Monarchia Pontificis* were known in the time of St. Jerome, and Tunstall, another great friend of More's, seems to have held semi-heterodox views on the question. As Father Bridgett says, "More must have at first been perplexed between Fisher and Tunstall, but when

<sup>1</sup> See a communication to the *Tablet*, by Father Bridgett, "Blessed Thomas More's Hesitation and Conscience," the 19th of November, 1898.



he gave himself to earnest study he soon came to share the conviction and faith of Fisher,"<sup>1</sup> and it was no longer to him a mere matter of opinion, but one of conscience, for which he willingly prepared to die.

And the hour of trial was drawing on fast. "The day that he foretold," says Bridgett, "and for which he was preparing himself soon came, when Henry's divorce and marriage with Anne Boleyn, as well as the succession to the Crown in her offspring, were to be confirmed by oaths."

The Act of Succession received the Royal assent March 30, 1534. The King's former marriage was declared to be against the laws of God and utterly void, any previous license or dispensation notwithstanding. His new marriage was accepted and ratified for good, undoubted, true, sincere, and perfect ever thereafter. Not only this, but all marriages within the degrees of affinity prohibited by the Jewish law were declared to be unlawful, and not to be admitted by any human dispensation.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of More*, p. 347. The influence of this Gallicanism may be traced even in More's last writings, where for instance he alleges, "Never thought I the Pope above the Council," and, "In the next Council it may very well happen that this Pope may be deposed." (Bridgett, p. 345.) As to this, it must in the first place be remembered that More was then pleading for his life, not writing for the general public. He is therefore imagining the case which might tend to favour Henry's pretensions most (*e g.*, the then recent Council of Basel), he was not discussing the normal case, which under ordinary circumstances theologians rightly keep in view—that is, the case of a Pope, as to the validity of whose election no Council could doubt. Whether More ever debated that case does not appear, nor whether, supposing he had done so, he would have solved it differently from modern theologians.

It must be remembered that the Sovereign Pontiff had just solemnly proclaimed (March 23) that the marriage with Catherine was valid, and that this was therefore a direct repudiation of his authority. Also that it was hitherto unheard of in England that Parliament should meddle in matrimonial causes, which were of spiritual cognizance. Nor was this all.

It was also enacted that a corporal oath was to be taken by all the King's subjects to observe the whole contents of the Act. The form of this oath was not prescribed, but one was speedily devised by letters patent, and no time was lost in applying the new test. A Commission was appointed to administer the oath, and at once began sitting at Lambeth. The two Houses were sworn on the day of their prorogation, March 30. The Commission (which consisted of Archbishop Cranmer, Chancellor Audley, Benson, Abbot of Westminster, and Thomas Cromwell) summoned More before them on April 13. He was the only layman who had as yet been cited. We will let Roper tell the story :

"Then Sir Thomas More, as his accustomed manner always was ere he entered into any matter of importance, . . . to go to church to be confessed, to hear Mass, and be houseled, so did he likewise in the morning early the self-same day that he was summoned before the lords at Lambeth. And whereas he evermore used before, at his departure from his wife and children, whom he tenderly loved,

to have them bring him to the boat, and there to kiss them, and bid them all farewell, then would he suffer none of them forth the gate to follow him, but pulled the wicket after him, and shut them all from him; and with a heavy heart, as by his countenance it appeared, with me and our four servants, there took boat towards Lambeth. Wherein sitting still sadly awhile, at the last he suddenly rounded me in the ear, and said: 'Son Roper, I thank our Lord the field is won.' What he meant thereby I then wist not, yet, loath to seem ignorant, I answered: 'Sir, I am therefore very glad.' But, as I conjectured afterward, it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually that he conquered all his carnal affection utterly."<sup>1</sup>

We will now let Blessed Thomas himself describe this momentous interview. We quote from a letter he wrote to Margaret Roper a few days later.

<sup>1</sup> Roper, *Life of More*, p. 81. Stapleton tells us that More had taken a strange way of preparing his family for the inevitable separation. He would hire an official to come suddenly to his house as with a warrant of arrest. The whole household was of course plunged in consternation and grief, and More then would take occasion to reprove those who gave way too much to their lamentations, and praise those who were more resigned to the will of God. He would then tell them that this time the summons was not a genuine one, but devised by himself to prepare them for the future. Stapleton compares this to the conduct of St. John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria, who having built his own tomb left it unfinished, and ordered the workmen to come to him at great festivals and remind him that it was not yet ready, and that the hour of death was uncertain. (p. 289.)

“When I was before the lords at Lambeth I was the first that was called in, albeit that Master Doctor, the Vicar of Croydon, was come before me and divers others. After the cause of my sending for declared unto me (whereof I somewhat marvelled in my mind, considering that they sent for no temporal men but me), I desired the sight of the oath, which they showed me under the great seal. Then desired I the sight of the Act of Succession, which was delivered me in a printed roll. After which read secretly by myself, and the oath considered with the Act, I answered unto them that my purpose was not to put any fault either in the Act or any man that made it, nor to condemn the conscience of any other man; but as for myself, in good faith my conscience so moved me in the matter, that though I would not deny to swear to the succession, yet unto that oath that there was offered me I could not swear without jeopardizing of my soul to perpetual damnation. And that if they doubted whether I did refuse the oath only for grudge of my conscience or for any fantasy, I was ready therein to satisfy them by my oath, which if they trusted me not, what should they be the better to give me any oath? And if they trusted that I would therein swear true, then trusted I that of their goodness they would not move me to swear the oath that they offered me, perceiving that for to swear it was against my conscience.

“Unto this my Lord Chancellor said, that they all were very sorry to hear me say this, and see me thus refuse the oath, and they said all, that on

their faith I was the very first that ever refused it, which would cause the King's Highness to conceive great suspicion of me and great indignation toward me. And therewith they showed me the roll and let me see the names of the lords and the commons, which had sworn and subscribed their names already. Which notwithstanding, when they saw that I refused to swear the same myself, not blaming any other man that had sworn, I was, in conclusion, commanded to go down into the garden, and therefore I tarried in the old barred chamber that looketh into the garden, and would not go down because of the heat.

"In that time I saw Master Dr. Latimer come into the garden, and there walked he with divers other doctors and chaplains of my lord of Canterbury. And very merry I saw him, for he laughed and took one or twain about the neck so handsomely that, if they had been women, I would have weened he had been waxen wanton. After that came Master Dr. Wilson forth from the lords, and was with two gentlemen brought by me, and gentlemanly sent straight unto the Tower. What time my lord of Rochester was called in before them, that can I not tell. But at night I heard that he had been before them, but where he remained that night, and so forth till he was sent hither, I never heard. I heard also that Master Vicar of Croydon, and all the remnant of the priests of London that were sent for, were sworn; and that they had such favour at the Council's hand, that they were not lingered or made to dance any long attendance to their

travail and cost, as suitors were sometimes wont to be, but were sped apace to their great comfort ; so far forth that Master Vicar of Croydon, either for gladness or for dryness, or else that it might be seen, *quod ille notus erat pontifici*, went to my lord's buttery bar and called for drink, and drank *valde familiariter*.

"When they had played their pageant and were gone out of the place, then was I called in again. And then was it declared unto me what a number had sworn since I went aside, gladly without any sticking. Wherein I laid no blame in no man, but for mine own self answered as before. Now, as well before as then, they somewhat laid unto me for obstinacy, that whereas before, since I refused to swear, I would not declare any special part of that oath that grudged my conscience, and opened the cause wherefore. For thereunto I had said unto them, that I feared lest the King's Highness would, as they said, take displeasure enough towards me for the only refusal of the oath. And that if I should open and disclose the causes why, I should therewith but further exasperate His Highness, which I would in nowise do, but rather would abide all the danger and harm that might come towards me than give His Highness any occasion of further displeasure than the offering of the oath unto me of pure necessity constrained me.

"Howbeit, when they divers times imputed this to me for stubbornness and obstinacy, that I would neither swear the oath, nor yet declare the causes why I declined thus far towards them, that rather

than I would be accounted for obstinate, I would upon the King's license, or rather his such commandment had, as might be my sufficient warrant, that my declaration should not offend His Highness nor put me in the danger of any of his statutes, I would be content to declare the causes in writing, and (over that) to give an oath in the beginning, that if I might find those causes by any man in such wise answered as I might think my own conscience satisfied, I would after that with all my heart swear the principal oath too. To this I was answered, that although the King would give me license under his letters patent, yet would it not serve me against the statute. Whereto I said, that yet if I had them, I would stand unto the trust of his honour at my peril for the remnant. But yet thinketh me lo! that if I may not declare the causes without peril, then to leave them undeclared is no obstinacy.

"My lord of Canterbury taking hold upon that that I said, that I condemned not the conscience of them that sware, said unto me, that it appeared well, that I did not take it for a very sure thing and a certain, that I might not lawfully swear it, but rather as a thing uncertain and doubtful. 'But then,' said my lord, 'you know for a certainty, and a thing without doubt, that you be bound to obey your sovereign lord your King. And therefore are you bound to leave off the doubt of your unsure conscience in refusing the oath, and take the sure way in obeying of your prince, and swear it.' Now all was it so, that in mine own mind methought myself not concluded, yet this argument

seemed me suddenly so subtle, and namely with such authority coming out of so noble a prelate's mouth, that I could again answer nothing thereto, but only that I thought myself I might not well do so, because that in my conscience this was one of the cases in which I was bounden that I should not obey my prince, since that (whatsoever other folks thought in the matter, whose conscience or learning I would not condemn nor take upon me to judge), yet to my conscience the truth seemed on the other side. Wherein I had not informed my conscience neither suddenly nor slightly, but by long leisure and diligent search for the matter. And of truth, if that reason may conclude, then have we a ready way to avoid all perplexities; for in whatsoever matter the doctors stand in great doubt, the King's commandment, given upon whether side he list, solveth all doubts.

"Then said my lord of Westminster to me, that howsoever the matter seemed unto mine own mind, I had cause to fear that mine own mind was erroneous, when I see the great Council of the realm determine of my mind the contrary, and that therefore I ought to change my conscience. To that I answered that if there were no more but myself upon my side, and the whole Parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to mine own mind only against so many. But on the other side, if it be so that in some things for which I refuse the oath, I have (as I think I have) upon my part as great a council and a greater too, I am not then bounden to change my conscience and conform it to



the Council of one realm against the general council of Christendom.

“Upon this Master Secretary, as he that tenderly favoureth me, said and sware a great oath, that he had liever that his own only son (which is of truth a goodly young gentleman, and shall, I trust, come to much worship) had lost his head, than that I should thus have refused the oath. For surely the King’s Highness would now conceive a great suspicion against me, and think that the matter of the nun of Canterbury was all contrived by my drift. To which I said that the contrary was true and well known; and whatsoever should mishap me, it lay not in my power to help it without the peril of my soul.

“Then did my Lord Chancellor repeat before me my refusal unto Master Secretary, as to him that was going unto the King’s Grace; and in the rehearsing his Lordship repeated again that I denied not but was content to swear unto the succession. Whereunto I said, I would be content, if I might see my oath so framed, as might stand with my conscience. Then said my lord: ‘Marry, Master Secretary, mark that too, that he will not swear that neither but under some certain manner.’ ‘Verily no, my lord,’ quoth I, ‘but that I will see it made in such wise first as I shall myself see that I shall neither be forsworn nor swear against my conscience.’ Surely as to swear to the succession I see no peril; but I thought and think it reason that to mine own oath I look well myself, and be of counsel also in the fashion; and never intended

to swear for a piece and set my hand to the whole oath. Howbeit, as help me God, as touching the whole oath I never withdrew any man from it, nor never advised any to refuse it, nor never put nor will put any scruple in any man's head, but leave every man to his own conscience. And methinketh in good faith that were it good reason that every man should leave me to mine."

At the end of his examination More was committed to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster. During the days that followed there was much discussion as to what should be done with him and with Bishop Fisher, who had been cited on the same day and had also refused the oath. It was inferred that it was to the preamble of the Act of Succession that they especially objected, for it contained a denunciation of the Pope; and the oath committed them to all the statements of the Act.<sup>1</sup> Cranmer suggested that they should be allowed to swear merely to the succession, which they were willing to do. This would save scandal, he thought, and quiet the realm. But this advice was not taken. The King was strengthened in his obduracy, it is said, by the clamours of Anne Boleyn, and he signified by Cromwell that this measure of concession would by no means satisfy him. "They should be sworn as well to the preamble as to the Act." Another compromise suggested was, that they should swear that they would not divulge whether they had taken the oath or not. This kind of compromise

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 244.

was indeed characteristic of Cranmer, but would have been most repugnant to our martyr's noble and conscientious spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Having again refused the oath, More was committed to the Tower on Friday, April 17. Fisher was sent to the same fatal prison-house.

"Their imprisonment," writes the Anglican historian,<sup>2</sup> "was a stretch of despotic power. It is true that misprision of treason was the guilt attached by the Act to those who refused to take an oath concerning the succession; and imprisonment at the King's pleasure was among the penalties of misprision of treason. But the Act as yet gave no authority to the commissioners to punish; and, before they could be punished, the two recusants ought either to have been indicted before a jury by common law, or proceeded against by a bill of attainder. Bills of attainder were brought against them at last, as all the world knows; but not before the next session of Parliament, when they had been in prison eight months. And in the same session the Act of Succession was renewed and the oath at length inserted. Their previous illegal imprisonment was thus covered, for the commissioners might make a certificate against any person refusing the oath, such certificate to be as available as an indictment for judgment and execution against the

<sup>1</sup> Cranmer suggested that the exact nature of the oath taken should be *suppressed*. Thus the martyrs would have appeared to have yielded and their example would have been lost.

<sup>2</sup> Dixon, i. p. 208.

offender. A more shameful piece of retrospective legislation can hardly be conceived."

Sir Thomas perfectly understood this point ; he said to his daughter :

" I may tell thee, Meg, they that have committed me hither for refusing of this oath, not agreeable with their statute, are not by their own law able to justify mine imprisonment. And surely, daughter, it is great pity that any Christian prince should, by a flexible council ready to follow his affections, and by a weak clergy lacking grace constantly to stand to their learning, with flattery be so shamefully abused."<sup>1</sup>

The place of the martyr's imprisonment is said to have been the Beauchamp Tower in the western ward, a tower well known to modern visitors.

"As he was going thitherward," says Roper, "wearing, as he commonly did, a chain of gold about his neck, Sir Richard Southwell, that had the charge of his conveyance thither, advised him to send home his chain to his wife or some of his children. 'Nay, sir,' quoth he, 'that I will not ; for if I were taken in the field by my enemies, I would that they should somewhat fare the better for me. At whose landing Mr. Lieutenant [Sir Edmund Walsingham] was ready at the Tower gate to receive him, where the porter demanded of him his upper garment. 'Mr. Porter,' quoth he, 'here it is,' and took off his cap and delivered it to him, saying : 'I am sorry it is no

<sup>1</sup> Roper, pp. 85, 86.

better for thee.' 'No, sir,' quoth the porter, 'I must have your gown.' And so was he by Mr. Lieutenant conveyed to his lodging, where he called unto him John a Wood, his own servant, there appointed to attend him, who could neither read nor write, and sware him before the lieutenant that if he should hear or see him at any time speak or write any matter against the King, Council, or the state of the realm, he should open it to the lieutenant, that the lieutenant might in contentment reveal it to the Council."

"Now when he had remained in the Tower little more than a month, my wife, longing to see her father, by her earnest suit at length got leave to go unto him. At whose coming, after the seven psalms and litany said<sup>1</sup> (which whensoever she came unto him, ere he fell in talk of any worldly matter, he used accustomedly to say with her), among other communication he said unto her: 'I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here ween that they have done me a high displeasure; but I assure thee on my faith, mine own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and ye that be my children, I would not have failed long ere this, to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter too. But since I have come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my lack among you. I find no cause, I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* of course, the seven penitential psalms and Litany of the Saints.

here than at home, for methinks God maketh me a wanton and setteth me on His lap and dandleth me.' . . . And at another time, when he had first questioned with my wife a while of the order of his wife, children, and state of house in his absence, he asked her how Queen Anne did. 'In faith, father,' quoth she, 'never better.' 'Never better, Meg!' quoth he; 'alas! Meg, alas! it pitieth me to remember into what misery she shall shortly come.'"<sup>1</sup>

It was to Margaret that he had written, with a piece of charcoal, this most beautiful letter, a short time after his committal to the Tower:

"Mine own good daughter, our Lord be thanked I am in good health of body and in good quiet of mind: and of worldly things I no more desire than I have. I beseech Him make you all merry in the hope of Heaven. And such things as I somewhat longed to talk with you all concerning the world to come, our Lord put them into your minds, as I trust He doth and better too, by His Holy Spirit, who bless you and preserve you all. Written with a coal by your tender loving father, who in his prayers forgetteth none of you all, nor your babes, nor your nurses, nor your good husbands, nor your good husbands' shrewd wives, nor your father's shrewd wife neither, nor our other friends. And thus fare ye heartily well, for lack of paper."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roper, pp. 83, 84. Cresacre More makes him add: "These dances of hers will prove such dances that she will spurn our heads off like footballs. But it will not be long ere her head will dance the like dance." (p. 231.)

<sup>2</sup> *English Works*, p. 1430.

Alas, that this beloved daughter should have been the instrument of his keenest trial! She had herself taken the oath with the condition, "as far as was lawful," and she wrote to urge him to do the same. He replied sadly, "I hear many terrible things towards me; but surely they all touched me never so near, nor were they so grievous unto me, as to see you, my well-beloved child, in such vehement piteous manner, labour to persuade unto me the thing, wherein I have, of pure necessity for respect unto mine own soul, so often given you so precise an answer before."

Stapleton gives us a *résumé* of her arguments. He was more bound to the King, she urged, than any man in England, and therefore ought the rather to obey his will in a case that was not evidently repugnant to God's law. Now it did not seem credible that all the wise and learned men of England should all impugn the will of God, and that therefore he should beware of how he pinned his soul upon Bishop Fisher. Besides, how could he a layman go against the judgment of almost all the Bishops and Doctors of the realm; should he not rather accommodate his conscience to theirs, was it not presumption to set himself up against them all? He answered her with beautiful humility but with invincible firmness. He condemned no one, for taking the oath, "for some may do it upon temporal hopes, or fear of great losses, for which I will never think any have taken it; for I imagine that nobody is so frail and fearful as myself. Some may hope, that God will not impute it unto them

for a sin, because they do it by constraint. Some may hope to do penance presently after, and others are of opinion that God is not offended with our mouth, so our heart be pure, but as for my part, I dare not jeopardy myself upon these vain hopes." As to the numbers against him, he had on his side many more in other parts of Christendom and all the doctors of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to forgive the devoted daughter for her efforts to save that beloved life, and indeed it is clear that she did not really wish him to do anything against his conscience.

In reply to a beautiful letter in which her father urged her to cease from labouring to change his mind, saying that his only grief ("and that a deadly grief and much more deadly than to hear of mine own death, for the fear thereof, I thank our Lord, the fear of hell, the hope of heaven, and the Passion of Christ daily more and more assuage") was to think that his dear ones might suffer through his steadfastness, she replied in beautiful and loving words:

"Father, what think you hath been our comfort since your departing from us? Surely the experience we have had of your life past, and godly conversation, and wholesome counsel and virtuous example, and a surety not only of the continuance of that same, but also a great increase by the

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More, p. 230. "But go we now to them that are dead before and that are, I trust, in Heaven; I am sure that it is not the fewer part of them that, all the time while they lived, thought in some of the things that way that I think now."



goodness of our Lord, to the great rest and gladness of your heart, devoid of all earthly dregs, and garnished with the noble vesture of heavenly virtues, a pleasant palace for the Holy Spirit of God to rest in, who defend you (as I doubt not, good father, but of His goodness He will) from all trouble of mind and body, and give me, your most loving, obedient daughter and handmaid, and all us your children and friends, to follow that that we praise in you, and to our only comfort remember and commune together of you, that we may in conclusion meet with you, mine own dear father, in the bliss of Heaven, to which our most merciful Lord hath bought us with His Precious Blood."

Poor Lady More however could not understand her husband at all. When she came to see him she reproached him roundly for preferring to stay among the rats and mice in a close, filthy prison when he might be enjoying his liberty, the good-will of the King, and the company of his family in his "right fair house" at Chelsea.

"I muse what a God's name you mean here still thus fondly to tarry," she cried in her vexation.

Sir Thomas listened to her quietly, and then said, cheerfully, "I pray thee, good Mistress Alice, tell me one thing."

"What is that?" saith she.

"Is not this house as near heaven as mine own?"

"Tilly vally, tilly vally," quoth she, in her homely fashion. "*Bone Deus*, man, will this gear never be left?"

"Well then, Mistress Alice, if it be so," quoth he, "it is very well. For I see no great cause why I should much joy in my house or in anything thereunto belonging, when if I should but seven years lie buried under the ground and then arise and come hither again, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get out of doors and tell me it was none of mine. What cause have I then to like such a house as would so soon forget his master?"

"Again, tell me, Mistress Alice, how long do you think we may live and enjoy it?"

"Some twenty years," said she.

"Truly," replied he, "if you had said some thousand years it had been somewhat; and yet he were a very bad merchant that would put himself in danger to lose eternity for a thousand years; how much the rather, if we are not sure to enjoy it one day to an end."<sup>1</sup>

Another time she much lamented that his cell door was shut on him at night and made fast by the jailer. "For by my troth," quoth she, "if the door should be shut upon me, I would ween it would shut up my breath." At that word of hers the prisoner laughed in his mind; but he durst not laugh aloud nor say nothing to her, for somewhat indeed he stood in awe of her, and had his finding<sup>2</sup> there much part of her charity for alms, but he could not but laugh inwardly, while he wist well enough that she used on the inside to shut every

<sup>1</sup> Roper, p. 89; Cresacre More, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> His finding, *i.e.*, that which had to be found, his sustenance.

night full surely her own chamber to her, both doors and windows too, and used not to open them of all the long night."<sup>1</sup>

Yet his privations and sufferings in the Tower were in reality no laughing matter. Besides his old disease of the breast, which he had pleaded as an excuse, in order to resign the Chancellorship, he was slowly dying of gravel and stone, and suffered agonies at night from cramp. According to the strange custom of those days, he had to pay heavily for his board and lodging in the prison,<sup>2</sup> and yet for the smallest comforts he had to depend on the charity of friends outside. Nevertheless, he was always himself, cheerful and smiling, with a merry jest for his friends; as when he told the Lieutenant of the Tower, who excused himself for the poor cheer he was obliged to make him (lest he should incur the King's displeasure), "Assure yourself, I do not mislike my cheer, but whensoever I do, then thrust me out of your doors." Nor did he neglect his old mortifications. He still wore his rough hair-shirt in the prison-cell, and still was wont on certain days "to punish his body with whips and knotted cords." Thus brightly and peacefully did he prepare himself for martyrdom.

His enemies however would not leave him in peace. His imprisonment grew more rigorous as they saw his constancy unchanged. No visits were allowed to be paid him. The greatest trial however

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogue of Comfort*, bk. iii. ch. 20. Apud Bridgett, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> Ten shillings a week for himself and five shillings a week for his servant.

was to be deprived of the services of the Church. Though forbidden to assist at Holy Mass, he nevertheless still strove to keep the feasts and festivals by uniting himself in spirit with the Church. Stapleton tells us that he was accustomed to dress more carefully when the great feasts came round.

Thus the weary months wore away, and when Parliament met again in November he was still in his prison-cell.

This Parliament had the miserable task set it of justifying, as far as might be, the injustice already committed. It was accordingly voted that the oath, which had already been administered to the prisoners of the Tower, was to be reputed the very oath intended by the Act of Succession. At the same time, More was attainted of misprision of treason,<sup>1</sup> grants of land made to him in 1522 and 1525, were resumed; he was declared to be a sower of sedition and guilty of gross ingratitude to his royal benefactor.

At the end of the year Lady More and his children petitioned Henry for his pardon and release on the ground of his sickness and their poverty. They pleaded that his offence sprang not from malice or obstinacy, but "of such a long continued deep-rooted scruple as passeth his power to avoid and put away." In May, 1535, the appeal was renewed. Lady More had been put to such distress that she had been obliged to sell her clothes to pay her husband's fees for board

<sup>1</sup> Save for a pension from the Order of St. John of Jerusalem he was now utterly penniless. (Hutton, p. 253.)

in prison. But Henry was obdurate. By his side was one who had sworn More's destruction ever since the day he had refused to be present at her coronation. Meanwhile Parliament proceeded in its fell work of destruction. The title of Supreme Head of the Church of England was conferred on the King, and it was made high treason for any person, after the 1st day of February next following [1535, according to our style], "maliciously to wish, will, or desire, by words or writing," to deny any of the royal titles, or to slanderously and maliciously publish or pronounce "that the King was a heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel, or usurper of the crown."

"It was a wonderful surrender of liberty," writes Canon Dixon, "this law to make words high treason; and by historians who cannot understand why the guardians of the realm should have yielded such tremendous power into the King's hands, it is assumed that there was some terrible crisis, struggle, or danger impending, which was to be met by extraordinary measures. The truth is, that these extraordinary measures were taken in order to create a crisis."<sup>1</sup>

More's position was thus daily becoming more dangerous. Parliament had made it high treason to "imagine" anything against the royal titles. If the prudent confessor would not speak or write, at least his silence might be interpreted as a "malicious wish, will, or desire," and thus his life

<sup>1</sup> Dixon, vol. i. p. 234.

was at last brought by law within the King's power.<sup>1</sup>

But it was sought, if possible, to make him speak. In April, 1535, Cromwell went to the Tower and asked the prisoner for his opinion on these statutes ; were they lawful in his eyes or no ? More declared himself a faithful subject of the King, and declined any further answer. On May the 7th the scene was repeated. Cromwell threatened that the King would compel Sir Thomas to give a precise reply. To this he replied that it would be hard to make him choose between the loss of his soul and the destruction of his body—a saying on which much stress was laid at his trial. Cromwell, who was accompanied by Cranmer, Audley, the Duke of Suffolk, and the Earl of Wiltshire, Anne Boleyn's father, tried every expedient to make him commit himself. At last, baffled by the unvarying prudence of his answers, they brutally taunted him with cowardice. "Why did he not speak out against the statute if he cared not for life ? It appeared well that he was not content to die." More answered with noble simplicity : "I have not been a man of such holy living that I might be bold to offer myself to death, lest God for my presumption might suffer me to fall." This is the true spirit of the martyrs. They are not fakirs who rush blindly on death, they do not expose themselves to it without necessity, but when the alternative is put before them of apostasy or death they cheerfully and sweetly choose the latter, counting it all joy to suffer

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 254.

tribulation in the cause of Christ. So was it with Blessed Thomas. To the repeated examinations with which his persecutors wearied him,<sup>1</sup> his answers were marked by consummate prudence, as of one who was determined in no way to provoke persecution, but quietly to wait on the Providence of God.

Meanwhile he turned with more zeal than ever to the composition of devotional treatises, a meditation on the Passion of our Lord, a Devotional Preparation for Holy Communion, and the incomparable *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. "Of these writings, it may be said that tedious as the style may appear to modern readers, there are no more deeply devotional works in the English language."<sup>2</sup> They are "masterpieces, rich in devotional feeling, in genuine eloquence, and in brilliant wit."<sup>3</sup> The *Dialogue of Comfort* has happily been reprinted in our own day, so that it is better known to the modern reader than most of the martyr's writings, but still far less known than it deserves to be. Father Bridgett truly says that it is "one of the most instructive and interesting books ever written 'to justify the ways of God to men.' Its earnest and pathetic arguments are relieved by mirth, yet its very mirth is pathos when we remember the writer and the time and place of its composition."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Another took place on June the 3rd, and two more during the following days.

<sup>2</sup> Hutton, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Lilly, *Renaissance Types*, p. 358.

<sup>4</sup> Bridgett, p. 395.

He was still engaged upon his treatise on the Passion when the end came. "He had just reached the words, 'They laid hands on Jesus,' when the hands of Henry's officials were laid on his books, and he knew that the time of his own passion had come."

The reason, or rather the excuse, for depriving the martyr of his last solace, was the discovery that a correspondence had taken place between him and his fellow-prisoner, Bishop Fisher. Though nothing material could be discovered from repeated examinations as to these letters, they were made the pretext for more rigorous measures. Even Margaret Roper was henceforth denied access to her father.<sup>1</sup>

He, however, nothing daunted, closed the shutters of his cell and sat in darkness, the better to meditate on the joys of Heaven. When asked the reason by the lieutenant, he replied, merrily: "When all the wares are gone the shop windows might as well be shut." "Yet still by stealth," says Cresacre More, "he would get little pieces of paper, in which he would write divers letters with a coal, of which my father left me one, which I account as a precious jewel, afterwards drawn over by my grandfather's son with ink."<sup>2</sup>

It was when his books were being taken away that the famous conversation with Rich, the Solicitor General, took place, which served in his

<sup>1</sup> Their last meeting seems to have been on May the 4th, when they witnessed together the setting forth of the Blessed Carthusians for their place of martyrdom.

<sup>2</sup> P. 240.



enemies' hands to bring the martyr to the longed-for end.

I will quote Roper's account of it.<sup>1</sup>

"Mr. Rich, afterward Lord Rich, . . . Sir Richard Southwell, and one Mr. Palmer, servant to the Secretary, were sent to Sir Thomas More unto the Tower to fetch away his books from him. And while Sir Richard Southwell and Mr. Palmer were busy in the trussing up of his books, Mr. Rich, pretending friendly talk with him, among other things of a set course, as it seemed, said thus unto him, 'Forasmuch as it is well known, Mr. More, that you are a man both wise and learned as well in the laws of the realm as otherwise, I pray you therefore, sir, let me be so bold as of good-will to put unto you this case: Admit there were, sir,' quoth he, 'an Act of Parliament that the realm should take me for King, would not you, Mr. More, take me for King?' 'Yes, sir,' quoth Sir Thomas More, 'that would I.' 'I put the case further,' quoth Mr. Rich, 'that there were an Act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for Pope, would you not then, Mr. More, take me for Pope?' 'For answer, sir,' quoth Sir Thomas More, 'to your first case, the Parliament may well, Mr. Rich, meddle with the state of temporal princes; but to make answer to your other case, I will put you this case: Suppose the Parliament would make a law that God should not be God, would you then say that God were not God?' 'No, sir,' quoth he, 'that would I not; sith no Parliament may make any

<sup>1</sup> It took place on the 12th of June. (Roper, p. 90.)

such law.' 'No more,' said Sir Thomas More (as Mr. Rich reported of him), 'could the Parliament make the King Supreme Head of the Church.'

"Upon whose only report was Sir Thomas More indicted of high treason on the statute<sup>1</sup> to deny the King to be Supreme Head of the Church, unto which indictment were put these heinous words, *maliciously, traitorously, and devilishly.*"

The end was indeed near. On June the 19th, the three holy Carthusians, William Exmew, Humphrey Middlemore, and Sebastian Newdigate, were dragged out to die, and on the 22nd, the feast of St. Alban, our protomartyr, a still more illustrious victim, suffered in the person of Cardinal Fisher. Royal orders were issued bidding the preachers dwell on his horrible treasons and at the same time on those of More. The martyr learned the tidings with the utmost calmness.

On July the 1st, he was himself indicted of high treason at Westminster Hall.<sup>1</sup> A special commission of *oyer and terminer* had been issued for the purpose five days earlier to Audley, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, Cromwell, Anne Boleyn's father and brother, four other peers and ten judges. The indictment was of immense length. It rehearsed that the prisoner had in divers ways infringed the Act of Supremacy, and relied for proof on his answers to the Council while in the Tower, and on the alleged conversation with Rich. More, owing to his infirmities (he was almost a

<sup>1</sup> 26 Henry VIII. c. 13.

dying man) was allowed to be seated.<sup>1</sup> With much dignity he denied the principal charges. He had never maliciously opposed the King's second marriage, he had not advised Fisher to disobey the Act of Supremacy, nor had he described that Act as a two-edged sword, approval of which ruined the soul, and disapproval the body. Rich, who was called to give his account of the conversation in the Tower, he denounced as a perjurer.<sup>2</sup> "If I were a man, my lords, that did not regard an oath, I need not stand in this place at this time as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Mr. Rich, be true, then I pray that I may never see the face of God, which I would not say were it otherwise to win the whole world."

As to his having while in prison refused to the King "maliciously, falsely, and traitorously" his title of Supreme Head, the only proof that his enemies had to bring, besides Rich's perjured testimony, was his own reply to the Secretary and Council, that as he was dead to the world he did not care to think of such things, but only of the Passion of Christ. "I reply," urged the martyr

<sup>1</sup> "He was very weak from long imprisonment, and as he leant upon his staff, his hair now gray and his beard long, his face still cheerful and content, many must have thought of the strong man who five years before, as Lord High Chancellor of England, in that same Court of King's Bench, had knelt down every morning to ask his father's blessing." (Hutton, p. 262.)

<sup>2</sup> He added that Rich was well known to have the reputation of being "very light of his tongue, a great dicer and of no commendable fame." And that he knew him well, for they long had lived in the same parish, and that he was the last person he would have thought of confiding in.

quietly, "that your statute cannot condemn me to death for such silence, for neither your statute nor any laws in the world punish people except for words and deeds—surely not for keeping silence."

Nevertheless the jury returned a verdict of guilty, without even the pretence of deliberating. The trial was one of those which Lord Macaulay aptly designated as "murder preceded by mummery," and as the martyr well knew, the condemnation was inevitable. Sentence was accordingly pronounced by the Chancellor "according to the tenor of the new law." He was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn, to suffer the disgusting and horrible butchery authorized by English law for those found guilty of high treason, and he heard the terrible sentence with the utmost serenity.

Then at last he spoke out.<sup>1</sup> Hitherto he had had good reason to hold his peace. But now that the iniquitous sentence had fallen, it was the time to speak, and so Sir Thomas More bore solemn witness before God and man to the glorious cause for which he was about to suffer, to the ancient faith of England which King and Parliament were seeking to destroy. Westminster Hall never heard words more solemn and more momentous

<sup>1</sup> Roper (p. 94) says that he interrupted the Chancellor, who was beginning to pronounce sentence by reminding him that he had not complied with the formality of asking the prisoner if he had anything to say why judgment should not be passed against him, and that it was then that he spoke out so boldly. But Roper was not in court. The French account in Castelnau's *Memoirs* is by an eye-witness and says he spoke after the sentence.

than those which fell from the lips of this broken, prematurely aged man standing before his wicked judges. Thus he spoke, and in him spoke the laity of old England, true to the ancient paths.

“ ‘ Since I am condemned, and God knows how, I wish to speak freely of your statute for the discharge of my conscience. For the seven years that I have studied the matter, I have not read in any approved doctor of the Church that a temporal lord could or ought to be head of the spirituality.’ The Chancellor, interrupting him, said: ‘ What, More, you wish to be considered wiser and of better conscience than all the bishops and nobles of this realm?’ To this More replied: ‘ My lord, for one bishop of your opinion I have a hundred saints of mine; and for one Parliament of yours, and God knows of what kind, I have all the General Councils for 1,000 years; and for one kingdom, I have all the kingdoms of Christendom.’ Norfolk told him that his malice was now clear. More replied: ‘ What I say is necessary for discharge of my conscience and satisfaction of my soul, and to this I call God to witness, the sole searcher of human hearts. I say further, that your statute is ill made, because you have sworn never to do anything against the Church, which, through all Christendom is one and undivided, and you have no authority, without the common consent of all Christians, to make a law or Act of Parliament or Council against the union of Christendom. I know well that the reason why you condemned me is because I have never

been willing to consent to the King's second marriage; but I hope, in the Divine goodness and mercy, that, as St. Paul and St. Stephen, whom he persecuted, are now friends in Paradise, so we, though differing in this world, shall be united in perfect charity in the other. I pray God to protect the King and give him good counsel.'"<sup>1</sup>

Roper says<sup>2</sup> that More added that the new statute was against *Magna Charta*, of which the first clause was *quod Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit, et habeat omnia sua jura integra et illæsa*, and also contrary to the King's Coronation Oath—"Alleging moreover that no more might this realm of England refuse obedience to the See of Rome, than might the child refuse obedience to his own natural father. For, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians, 'I have regenerated you, my children in Christ;' so might St. Gregory, Pope of Rome (since by St. Augustine, his messenger, we first received the Christian faith), of us Englishmen truly say, 'You are my children, because I have, under Christ, given you everlasting salvation, a far higher and better inheritance than any carnal father can leave to his children, and by regeneration have made you spiritual children in Christ.'"<sup>3</sup>

"Now after his arraignment," continues Roper, "departed he from the bar to the Tower again led by Sir William Kingston, a tall, strong and comely knight, and his very dear friend. Who when he

<sup>1</sup> Bridgett, pp. 422, 423, from *Letters and Papers*, viii. p. 395.

<sup>2</sup> P. 95.

<sup>3</sup> P. 98.

had brought him from Westminster to the Old Swan towards the Tower, there with a heavy heart, the tears running down his cheeks, bade him farewell. Sir Thomas More, seeing him so sorrowful, comforted him with as good words as he could, saying, 'Good Mr. Kingston, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer; for I will pray for you and my good lady your wife that we may meet in Heaven together, where we shall be merry for ever and ever.' Soon after, Sir William Kingston, talking with me of Sir Thomas More said, 'In good faith, Mr. Roper, I was ashamed of myself, that at my departing from your father I found my heart so feeble and his so strong, that he was fain to comfort me who should rather have comforted him.'

"When Sir Thomas More came from Westminster to the Tower Ward again, his daughter, my wife, desirous to see her father, whom she thought she should never see in this world after, and also to have his final blessing, gave attendance about the Tower Wharf, where she knew he would enter into the Tower. There tarrying his coming, as soon as she saw him, after his blessing upon her knees reverently received, she hasting towards him, without consideration or care of herself pressing in amongst the midst of the throng and company of the guard, that with halbreds and bills went round about him, hastily ran to him, and there openly in sight of them embraced him, took him about the neck and kissed him. Who, well liking her most natural and dear daughterly affection towards him, gave her his fatherly blessing and

many godly words of comfort besides. She was not able to say any word but 'Oh, my father! Oh, my father!' 'Take patience, Margaret,' he said, 'and do not grieve; God has willed it so. For many years didst thou know the secret of my heart.'

"From whom after she was departed, she not satisfied with the former sight of him, and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her father, having respect neither to herself, nor to the press of people and multitude that were there about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck and divers times kissed him lovingly, and at last with a full and heavy heart was fain to depart from him; the beholding whereof was to many that were present so lamentable, that it made them for very sorrow thereof to weep and mourn."<sup>1</sup>

John More also came to receive his father's blessing on his knees,<sup>2</sup> and Margaret Clement and Dorothy Colley, who accompanied Margaret Roper, also ventured to embrace the holy martyr. Their tender affection, we know, was very pleasing to him.

The few days that remained were spent by More in the severest penitential exercises, scourging himself and meditating on death, wrapped in his shroud.<sup>3</sup> "He had no intimation of when his sentence was to be carried out; but on the 5th he

<sup>1</sup> Roper, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> This, according to Cresacre More, he did, as his father left Westminster Hall.

<sup>3</sup> "Walking about his chamber with a sheet about him, like a corpse ready to be buried, and using to whip himself very sore and long." (Cresacre More, p. 267.)



seemed to feel that death was at hand. He sent to his daughter Margaret his hair-shirt, which he had worn secretly for many years, with the last of his tender letters, so beautiful in its pathetic simplicity."<sup>1</sup> It was written with a charred stick, for pen and ink were denied him.<sup>2</sup>

"Our Lord bless you, good daughter, and your good husband, and your little boy, and all yours, and all my children, and all my godchildren, and all our friends. Recommend me when you may, to my good daughter Cicely, whom I beseech our Lord to comfort; and I send her my blessing, and to all my children, and pray her to pray for me. I send her an handkercher. And God comfort my good son, her husband. My good daughter Daunce hath the picture in parchment that you delivered me from my Lady Conyers. Her name is on the back side. Show her that I heartily pray her that you may send it in my name to her again, for a token from me to pray for me. I like special well Dorothy Colley. I pray you be good unto her. I would wot whether this be she you wrote me of. If not, yet I pray you be good to the other, as you may, in her affliction, and to my good daughter Joan Aleyn<sup>3</sup> too. Give her, I pray you, some kind answer, for she sued hither to me this day to pray you to be good to her. I cumber you, good Margaret, much; but I would be sorry if it should

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Stapleton, p. 334. More also sent his discipline with his hair-shirt, wrapping them up in a cloth. (*Ibid.* p. 339.)

<sup>3</sup> A maid-servant of his daughter's.

be any longer than to-morrow. For it is Saint Thomas even, and the *ut*as of Saint Peter, therefore to-morrow long I to go to God. It were a day very meet and convenient for me."<sup>1</sup>

"I never liked your manner towards me better than when you kissed me last; for I love when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy. Farewell, my dear child, and pray for me, and I shall for you and all your friends that we may merrily meet in Heaven. I thank you for your great cost. I send now to my good daughter Clement her algorism stone,<sup>2</sup> and I send her and my godson and all hers, God's blessing and mine. I pray you at good time convenient recommend me to my good son John More; I liked well his natural fashion.<sup>3</sup> Our Lord bless him and his good wife, my loving daughter; to whom I pray him be good as he hath great cause; and that if the land of mine come into his hand, he break not my will concerning his sister Daunce. And our Lord bless Thomas,<sup>4</sup> and Austin, and all that they shall have."

<sup>1</sup> The 6th of July is the eve of the Translation of St. Thomas of Canterbury, our martyr's patron-saint, and himself the most glorious of all our English martyrs. It is also the *ut*as or octave-day of SS. Peter and Paul. Sir Thomas well said that it was a fitting day for him to go to God. For he, like St. Thomas of old, was dying for the liberty of the Church of God, and witnessing with his blood to the Primacy of the See of Peter.

<sup>2</sup> Algorism-Stones; *Counters*. (Murray, *New English Dictionary*.)

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.*, at their last meeting, when he came from judgment. John More was now in prison.

<sup>4</sup> John More's children. Austin became the father of Cresacre More.

Even in his last hours he was exposed to vexations and importunities to change his mind. To a courtier who thus annoyed him, he replied at last, "Well, I have changed my mind." This was at once reported to the King, who sent back the man to ask in what the change consisted. Then Sir Thomas rebuked the courtier for his lightness, that he would tell the King every word that he spoke in jest; for he had merely meant that he would not shave off his beard before his execution as he had at first intended.<sup>1</sup>

When he was told that by the King's merciful pardon the horrible sentence of the law would be commuted into beheading, he replied, with the same indomitable cheerfulness, "God forbid that the King should use any more such mercy unto any of my friends; and God bless all my posterity from such pardons."

We are not told whether he had the consolation of receiving the last sacraments, but it is probable that, in accordance with custom, he was at least permitted to make his confession. And so, when the morning of July the 6th dawned, it found the martyr eagerly waiting for the end. Very early in the morning Sir Thomas Pope, "his singular dear friend," came from the King and Council to say that the execution would take place that day before nine o'clock. "Master Pope," he said, "for your tidings I most heartily thank you. I have always been bounden much to the King's High-

<sup>1</sup> In the Barberini Palace at Rome is a picture representing the martyr wearing his beard.

ness for the benefits and honours which he hath from time to time heaped on me. Yet more bounden am I to his Grace for putting me into this place, where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of my end; and most of all that it hath pleased him so shortly to rid me of the miseries of this wretched world. And therefore will I not fail to pray for his Grace, both here and in another world." Pope then told him that it was the King's wish that he should not use many words at his execution, to which the martyr humbly submitted. Then they spoke of his burial, at which the King gave leave for his wife and children to be present. So they bade farewell, and once more More had to comfort instead of to be comforted. "Quiet yourself, good Master Pope, and be not discomfited," he said gently, as the other's tears fell fast, "for I trust that we shall once in Heaven see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to see and love together in eternal bliss."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Few indeed could refrain from tears at the sight of this heroic death so calmly met. As Cardinal Pole wrote, "Strangers and men of other nations, that never had seen him in their lives, received so much grief at the hearing of his death, that reading the story thereof, they could not refrain from weeping, bewailing an unknown person only famous unto them for his worthy acts. Yea, I cannot hold myself from weeping as I write, though I be far off my country. I loved him dearly, who had not so many urgent causes of his love, as many others had, only in respect of his virtues and heroical acts, for which he was a most necessary member of his country, and now, God is my witness, I shed for him, even whether I would or no, so many tears, that they hinder me from writing, and often blot out the letters which I am framing, so that I can proceed no further." (*Pro Ecclesia Unitatis Defensione*, lib. 3, p. 66, f. 2. Cresacre More's translation, p. 266.)

"Upon whose departure," says Roper, "Sir Thomas More, as one that hath been invited to some solemn feast, changed himself into his best apparel,<sup>1</sup> which Mr. Lieutenant espying, advised him to put it off, saying, that he that should have it, was but a rascal.<sup>2</sup> 'What, Mr. Lieutenant,' quoth he, 'shall I account him a rascal that shall do me this day so singular a benefit? Nay, I assure you, were it cloth of gold, I should think it well bestowed on him, as St. Cyprian did, who gave his executioners thirty pieces of gold.' And albeit, at length, he, through Mr. Lieutenant's importunate persuasion, altered his apparel,<sup>3</sup> yet, after the example of the holy martyr St. Cyprian, did he of that little money that was left him send an angel of gold to his executioner."<sup>4</sup>

"He was therefore brought about nine of the clock by Mr. Lieutenant out of the Tower, his beard being long, which fashion he never before had used, his face pale and lean, carrying in his hands a red cross, casting his eyes often towards Heaven.<sup>5</sup> As he thus passed by a good woman's house, she came forth and offered him a cup of wine, which he refused, saying: 'Christ at His Passion drank no wine, but gall and vinegar.' There came another woman

<sup>1</sup> "His silk camlet gown which his entire friend Mr. Antonio Bonvisi gave him." (Cresacre More.)

<sup>2</sup> "Javill." (Cresacre More.)

<sup>3</sup> "For a gown of friese." (Cresacre More.)

<sup>4</sup> Roper, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Stapleton tells us that Margaret Clement once showed him a statuette that she had had made representing the martyr just as here described.

after him crying unto him for certain books which she had given into his custody when he was Lord Chancellor. To whom he said: 'Good woman, have patience but for one hour's space, and by that time the King's Majesty will rid me of the care I have for thy papers and all matters whatsoever.' Another woman suborned thereto, as some think, by his adversaries to disgrace him, followed him also crying out against him, that he had done her great injury, when he had been Lord Chancellor; to whom he gave the answer that he remembered her cause very well, and that if he were now to give sentence thereof, he would not alter what he had already done.

"Last of all there came a citizen of Winchester, who in times past having been greatly troubled with grievous temptations of despair, was brought by a friend of his to Sir Thomas More, when he was Lord Chancellor; who though he could not before by any wholesome counsel alter this his mind; yet Sir Thomas More promising him to pray for him, he was for the space of three years free from all such temptations. When Sir Thomas was committed, and he could get no leave to have access unto him, his temptation grew so great, that he often sought to have been the cruel murderer of himself; but now hearing Sir Thomas was to be executed, he came to London, and ran to Sir Thomas, as he was carried to execution, desiring him with great earnestness that he would help him by his prayers; for his temptation was come again unto him, and he could not possibly rid himself thereof;

to whom Sir Thomas spake thus : 'Go and pray for me and I will carefully pray for you.' He went away with confidence, and he never after was troubled with the like again.

"Being now brought to the scaffold where he was to be beheaded, it seemed to him so weak that it was ready to fall, wherefore he said merrily to Mr. Lieutenant, 'I pray you, sir, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself.' When he began to speak a little to the people, which were in great troops there to hear and see him, he was interrupted by the sheriff. Wherefore briefly he desired all the people to pray for him, and to bear witness with him that he there died in and for the faith of the Holy Catholic Church, a faithful servant both of God and the King. Having spoken but this, he kneeled down, and pronounced with great devotion the *Miserere* psalm ; which being ended he cheerfully rose up, and the executioner asking him forgiveness, he kissed him, saying, 'Thou wilt do me this day a greater benefit than ever any mortal man can be able to give me ; pluck up thy spirit, man, and be not afraid to do thy office ; my neck is very short, take heed therefore that thou strike not awry for saving thy honesty.' When the executioner would have covered his eyes, he said, 'I will cover them myself,' and presently he did so, with a cloth that he had brought with him for the purpose ; then laying his head upon the block, he bade the executioner stay until he had removed aside his beard, saying that that had never committed any treason. So with great alacrity and

spiritual joy, he received the fatal blow of the axe, which no sooner had severed the head from the body, but his soul was carried by angels into everlasting glory, where a crown of martyrdom was put upon him, which can never fade nor decay. And then he found those words true, which he had often spoken, that a man may lose his head and have no harm, yea, I say, unspeakable good and everlasting happiness."<sup>1</sup>

Thus his great-grandson tells the noble ending of this noble life. Such a story would be marred by any comments of my own. But I will permit myself to add the testimony of two writers, whose reverent homage is all the more striking, seeing, that they do not share the faith for which the martyr laid down his life so calmly and so joyously.

"With his stern devotion to principle," writes one, "his overmastering religious fervour, and his invincible courage, More combined an imperturbable cheerfulness which enabled him to detect a humorous element in the most unpromising situations. . . . His composure on the scaffold is probably without parallel."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More, pp. 273—275. Cf. the following passage from the *Dialogue of Comfort* (quoted by Bridgett, p. 440): "To this great glory of Heaven can there no man come *headless*. Our Head is Christ, and, therefore, to Him must we be joined, and as members of His must we follow Him, if we will come thither—'Know ye not that Christ must suffer passion and by that way enter into the kingdom?' Who can for very shame desire to enter into this Kingdom of Christ with ease, when He Himself entered not in His own without pain?" (Bk. iii. ch. 26.)

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxviii. 439.



“Of all the brave deaths upon English scaffolds,” writes the other, “which that sad century and the next produced, there was none more calm and bright than his. Of one who a hundred and ten years later died also for his conscience, it was said that ‘never did man put off mortality with better courage.’ Of More at least it may be declared that no man was ever more willing to die. And not only death was welcome, but happy was the path of affliction that led to it. More had learnt to tread in the road of the Passion of his Master, and it seemed to him to be strewn with flowers. With Mason he might cry—

I sing to think this is the way  
Unto my Saviour’s Face.

Whatever may be thought by theologians or historians of the speculative opinion (*sic*) for which More shed his blood, there can be no doubt that he died a martyr. . . . He was also, in the words of Pope Paul III., ‘excellent in sacred learning and bold in the defence of truth.’ . . . He died rather than tarnish the whiteness of his soul.”<sup>1</sup>

And to these let us add the beautiful tribute of Addison.<sup>2</sup>

“The innocent mirth,” he writes, “which had been so conspicuous in his life did not forsake him to the last. His death was of a piece with his life: there was nothing in it new, forced, or affected. He did not look upon the severing of his head from his

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *Spectator*, No. 349.

body as a circumstance which ought to produce any change in the disposition of his mind: and as he died in a fixed and settled hope of immortality he thought any unusual degree of sorrow and concern improper."

Cresacre More tells us that when news of his death was brought to the King he was playing at tables, with Anne Boleyn looking on. "Thou art the cause of this man's death," he cried, looking angrily at her,<sup>1</sup> and then leaving his place he retired to his chamber, where he fell into a fit of melancholy. But Cresacre doubts whether his grief were sincere, at any rate it was not lasting, for he continued cruelly and meanly to persecute the martyr's family.

"As soon as it became known," writes Dixon, "that the King of England was slaughtering the best of his subjects, and desecrating his capital with their mangled remains, a thrill of horror ran through Europe. In Rome the execution of the monks, the Bishop, and the Chancellor was listened to with tears by the Pope and Cardinals. The Emperor said he would rather have lost the two best cities in his dominions than two such men as Fisher and More. Some of the Protestant princes testified their dislike. The learned vied in lamenting the irreparable loss which literature had sustained in More. Erasmus reproached the tyrant who gave no impu-

<sup>1</sup> Her downfall may be said to have dated from this day. It will be remembered that the martyr had clearly predicted that fall.

nity to genius, nor knew that wit and learning should be raised above the hatred of the times. Plato was not beheaded by the Eginetans when he violated their laws. Diogenes went without fear into the presence of Philip of Macedon after he had reproved him for the madness of ambition. Which of the crimes of Nero was comparable with the murder of Seneca? What weighed so heavily on the memory of Mark Antony as the death of Cicero: on the memory of Augustus as his implacable resentment against Ovid? These reproaches have been echoed in our own day.<sup>1</sup> 'No such culprit as More,' exclaims a writer of the last generation,' had stood at any European bar for a thousand years: the condemnation of Socrates is the only parallel in history, nor could Socrates claim a moral superiority over More.'<sup>2</sup> Even the later necessitarians, who have nothing in their treasuries but contempt for the ecclesiastic Fisher, have dropped the tear of culture over the grave of the author of the *Utopia*. But there is little to lament in the glorious end of men who laid down their lives in the cause of the unity of the Church and the liberties of England."<sup>3</sup>

So great was the outcry that the King and Cromwell thought it necessary to furnish the

<sup>1</sup> "More's judicial murder has been described by a high legal functionary—Lord Campbell—as 'the blackest crime that ever has been perpetrated in England under the name of law.'" (*Renaissance Types*, p. 374.)

<sup>2</sup> Sir James Mackintosh, *History of England*. (Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*.)

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, i. pp. 295, 296.

ambassadors at foreign courts with a vindication of their conduct. Of this apology, of which the most elaborate form was sent to Rome, the Anglican historian drily observes that it rested on general charges against the dead which were not and never have been proved, and alleged the existence of a mass of evidence which was never produced and of which no trace or incidental confirmation has ever been found.<sup>1</sup> And he adds: "It is not often that an English monarch has found it needful to justify his rule against his sceptred compeers." But it became the custom of Henry VIII. to seek to blacken the characters of the victims he had destroyed.

Let us return to the scaffold where the headless body of the martyr lies, awaiting burial. The head itself was fixed, in accordance with custom, upon London Bridge, side by side with that of the Blessed John Fisher, those of the holy Carthusians having been thrown into the river to make room for them. The sacred body was handed over to the devoted daughter, who had ministered so faithfully to the martyr during life. By the Governor's permission, it was laid by her loving hands in the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower, "in the belfry," says Cresacre, "or as some say, as one entereth into the vestry, near unto the body of the holy martyr Bishop Fisher." There is however no vestry attached to this little church, in which so many illustrious saints and sinners lie. The traditional spot pointed out as the burial-place of our martyr,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* i. 299.

is near the entrance to the small bell-tower; "and if that was the resting-place of the holy ashes," writes Father Bridgett, "they will not have been removed to the vaults, as was the case with those in the nave, when the church was repaired in 1876."<sup>1</sup>

"But that which happened about Sir Thomas' winding-sheet," continues Cresacre, "was reported as a miracle by my aunt Roper, Mrs. Clement, and Dorothy Colley, Mr. Harris his wife. Thus it was; his daughter Margaret, having distributed all her money to the poor, for her father's soul, when she came to bury his body at the Tower, she had forgotten to bring a sheet; and there was not a penny of money left amongst them all: wherefore Mrs. Harris her maid went to the next draper's shop, and agreeing upon the price, made as though she would look for some money in her purse, and then try whether they would trust her or no; and she found in her purse the same sum, for which they had agreed upon, not one penny over or under; though she knew before certainly that she had not one cross<sup>2</sup> about her. This the same Dorothy affirmed constantly to Dr. Stapleton when they both lived at Doway in Flanders in Queen Elizabeth's

<sup>1</sup> The rumour as to the removal of the body to Chelsea found in a Latin Life of Fisher (Arundel MS. 152, f. 233), and supported by Weever and Fuller, does not seem to be correct. William Roper's will (4 Jan., 1577-8) evidently assumes that More did not lie at Chelsea. Father Morris is inclined to believe it, but *pace tanti viri* I cannot follow him here (but cf. *The Month*, February, 1891). In any case, the vault at Chelsea is now unhappily empty, having been probably rifled for the sake of the lead coffins.

<sup>2</sup> Cross, a coin. Most English coins had crosses on the reverse.

reign. His shirt, wherein he suffered, all embrued with his blood, was kept very carefully by Dr. Clement's wife, also living beyond the seas, as also his shirt of hair."<sup>1</sup>

"His head," More's great-grandson adds, "having remained some months upon London Bridge, being to be cast into the Thames, because room should be made for divers others, who in plentiful sort suffered martyrdom for the same Supremacy, shortly after, it was bought by his daughter Margaret, lest (as she stoutly affirmed before the Council, being called before them after for the same matter) it should be food for fishes; which she buried, where she thought fittest. It was very well to be known, as well by the lively favour<sup>2</sup> of him, which was not all this while in anything almost diminished; as also by reason of one tooth, which he wanted whilst he lived; herein it was to be admired, that the hairs of his head being almost gray before his martyrdom, they seemed now as it were reddish or yellow."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This famous relic is now at Abbotsleigh, in Devonshire, in possession of the Augustinian Canonesses. This community was founded at Louvain by Mother Margaret Clement, daughter of Margaret Clement, Sir Thomas's adopted daughter. She brought this precious treasure with her, and it has ever since been preserved in the community. A sleeve was given to Mother Margaret Hallahan, foundress of the Dominican Tertiaries of St. Catharine, and is preserved in their convent at Stone. Unhappily, it seems that the bloodstained shirt of the martyr is irrevocably lost.

<sup>2</sup> Lively favour, *i.e.*, lifelike appearance. (*Stanford Dictionary*, p. 389.)

<sup>3</sup> Cresacre More, p. 277. Stapleton, however, says the hairs of the beard.

Stapleton tells us that this venerable and sacred head was exposed on London Bridge for about a month, and that Margaret, who was anxiously awaiting the moment when it would be taken down, bribed the hangman who had orders to throw it into the river. The head, although it had been parboiled, according to custom, was still so easy to recognize that no one acquainted with the martyr during life could fail to know it again. The face was almost as beautiful as it had been during life. "This head Margaret most carefully preserved, embalmed in spices, as long as she lived, and up to this day it is kept by one of her family." Margaret was summoned before the Council for keeping her father's head as a relic as well as his books and writings. She earnestly begged that she might be allowed to keep his familiar letters for her solace, and it is consoling to be able to add that she was befriended by powerful men at Court, who saw that she was not further molested. But it seems that she buried the head, as Cresacre says, in accordance with the orders of the Council. Nor is there, I think, any doubt as to where she buried it, though Cresacre More is too cautious to tell us. For a constant tradition asserts that she laid it in the Roper family vault in St. Dunstan's Church, Canterbury, and there it still remains. The beautiful legend, immortalized in the lines of Tennyson—

Morn broadened on the borders of the dark  
Ere I saw her, who clasped in her last trance  
Her murdered father's head—

does not however seem to be justified by facts; for Margaret was buried (in 1544) at Chelsea in the tomb which her father had prepared for himself and in which her mother lay. Her husband is however buried at St. Dunstan's. A leaden vessel containing a head was to be seen in the Roper vault as late as 1835, placed on a ledge behind an iron grating. (It must be remembered that the Roper residence was in St. Dunstan's parish, and the gateway of the house is still pointed out near the old church.) The leaden box that contains the head is in the shape of a beehive, open in the front.<sup>1</sup>

Anthony à Wood is another witness to the truth of the Canterbury tradition.<sup>2</sup> "As for his head," he writes, "it was set upon a pole on London Bridge, where abiding about 14 days, was then privily bought by the said Margaret, and by her for a time carefully preserved in a leaden box, but afterwards with great devotion 'twas put into a vault . . . under a chapel joining to St. Dunstan's Church in Canterbury, where it doth yet remain, standing in the said box on the coffin of Margaret his daughter buried there."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1837.

<sup>2</sup> *Athen. Oxon.* i. p. 86. Bliss's Edition.

<sup>3</sup> There is an engraving of the box with the head in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It is only right to add that it was reported in November, 1535, that the head had turned black and been thrown into the river. (*Letters and Papers*, ix. n. 873.) Sir Richard Morison, on the other hand, in his answer to Cochläus, written in 1536, speaks of it as being still on the bridge. But Stapleton and Cresacre More had every reason for knowing the truth, and we may accept their testimony, which is only in accordance with all we know of Margaret Roper's filial devotion.



Almost the only relic of Blessed Thomas's body in Catholic hands is a vertebra of the neck, no doubt taken from the severed head. This is in possession of the English Canonesses at Bruges, having come to them from the Reverend Mother More, one of the last descendants of the martyr in the male line. The nuns have in recent years divided this relic into two and given half to the English Province of the Society of Jesus, and it is now venerated at St. Joseph's Church, Roehampton. Mother More's brother Thomas was the last Provincial of the old Society. He died in 1795, and through him Stonyhurst College acquired a wonderful collection of relics of the blessed martyr. They include the George—a jewel of extraordinary value and beauty—his seal as sub-treasurer, a Cameo—the head of our Lady—an embroidered cap, and a large gold crucifix which formerly contained a relic of St. Thomas the Apostle. There is also his hat, his pouncet-box (a cowrie shell with a silver lid), a gold enamelled crucifix, and a silver reliquary containing one of the martyr's teeth, and a small piece of bone.

At East Hendred in Berkshire his drinking-cup, made of oak bound together by rings of silver, is religiously preserved by his descendants, the Eyston family. Mr. Trappes, of Stanley House, Clitheroe, has his rosary or decade-ring, which once belonged to Mother More of Bruges.

The Earl of Denbigh has the book of Hours which he used, with some beautiful prayers written in the margin by the martyr's own hand, probably when a prisoner in the Tower. I do not think I

can better close this life of the martyr, than by quoting these aspirations of his soul made when the shadows of death were drawing round him. They may prove a consolation and a strength to others besides himself. They are written at the top and bottom of the pages which contain the Hours of the Passion—

*Gyve me thy grace good God  
To sette the worlde at naught ;  
To sett my mynde faste upon The, and not to hange  
uppon the blaste of mennys mowthis ;  
To be content to be solitary ;  
Not to long for worldly company ;  
Little and little to utterly caste off the worlde, and  
ridde my minde of all bysynes there ;  
Not to long to here eny worldly thyngis, but that  
the hering of worldly fantesyes may be to me displeasant.  
Gladly to be thinking of God  
Pituously to call for His helpe ;  
To lene unto the comfort of God ;  
Bysyly to labor to love Him ;  
To knowe myn owne vilite and wretchednesse.  
To humble and meken myself under the mighty hand of God :  
To bewayle my synnes passed ;  
For the purgyng of them patiently to suffer adversity.  
Gladly to bere my purgatory here ;  
To be joyful of tribulacions ;  
To walke the narrow way that leadeth to life ;  
To bere the crosse with Christ ;  
To have the last things in remembrance ;  
To have ever afore myn yie my death that ys ever at hand.  
To make deth no stranger to me.  
To foresee and consider the everlasting fyre of hell.*

*To pray for pardon before the judge come ;  
 To have continually in mynde the passyone Christ suffered for me.  
 For hys benefits uncessauntly to give him thankys.  
 To by the time agayn that I have loste.  
 To abstain from vague confabulacyons.  
 To eschew light, folish myrthe and gladnesse.  
 Recreations not necessary to cut off ;  
 Of worldly substance, frendys, libertie, life and all to sett the  
 loss at right nowght for the wyning of Christ.  
 To thinke my moste enemys mye beste frendys, for the  
 brethren of Ioseph could never have done hym so much goode  
 with their love and favour, as they did hym with their malice  
 and hatred.*

ED.

AUTHORITIES.—More's *Correspondence with Erasmus* is our chief authority for the early part of his life. It is to a large extent preserved in the various editions of Erasmus's Letters, of which the fullest is that edited by Le Clerc, and published at Leyden in 1706. There are others in the collections of More's Latin works. (Basel 1563, Louvain 1565 and 1566, Frankfort 1689.) The later editions are the fullest.

His *English Letters* will be found in his *English Works*. The correspondence which preceded his death, is also in *Letters and Papers*, in Roper's *Life*, &c.

Complete enumerations of More's *Works* will be found in Gillow's *Bibliographical Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of National Biography* ; Roper, Edit. Lewis, p. 174, and elsewhere.

The *English Works* are most conveniently studied in Rastall's edition of 1557. The fullest edition of the *Latin Works* is that of 1689 (Frankfort) with others, as above mentioned, Basel 1563, Louvain 1565 and 1566.

The *Official record of his trial* is preserved in the Record Office, *Baga de Secretis*. (*Third Report of the Deputy Keeper*, 1842.)

**BIOGRAPHERS.**—The first and principal biographer was *William Roper*, though his work was intended primarily to serve as notes for the use of Harpsfield. He wrote in the reign of Queen Mary, but his work was not published till 1626 (Paris). An edition from a better manuscript was brought out by the Rev. John Lewis in 1729. Other re-issues of Lewis' edition appeared in 1731, 1761, and 1817, the last and fullest edited by the Rev. S. W. Singer. I have used that of 1731.

*Nicholas Harpsfield* made use of Roper's manuscript without adding much new material. He also wrote in the reign of Mary. His work still remains in manuscript (e.g., British Museum, Harl. 6,253).

*Ellis Heywood. Il Moro* (Florence, 1556). This is a fictitious dialogue in Italian, the scene of which is laid in More's house at Chelsea; and it gives a fanciful account of his relations with his learned guests.

*William Rastall*, who died in 1565, wrote a life now lost. The surviving extracts, which chiefly concern Fisher, have been edited by Van Ortro, *Vie de B. J. Fisher*, pp. 396, &c.

*Thomas Stapleton. Tres Thomæ*, Douay, 1588 (French trans., Liege, 1849) is upon the whole, the best and fullest life. For his sources see Bridgett, *Introd.* ix. Re-issued, Cologne 1612, Gratz 1689.

*Cresacre More* (B. Thomas's great-grandson) wrote between 1615 and 1620. The first edition is dated 1627, that here used is London, 1726.

**MODERN LIVES.**—Of these the chief is that of Father Bridgett, *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, London, 1891. There are many others, of which we may especially commend W. H. Hutton (1895), written from an Anglican point of view, Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and D. Nisard, *Renaissance et Réforme*, vol. ii. (Second Edit., Paris, 1877), H. Bremond, *Le B. Th. More* (in the series *Les Saints*, Lecoffre, Paris, 1904), Lord Campbell, in his *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, with others, to which references will be found in the notes.

Notice may be drawn here to still unused materials for the study of More's judgments and rulings as Lord Chancellor, which are extant at the Record Office.

**RELICS.**—These have been already described in the text.

PORTRAITS.—The most important is Holbein's portrait now in the possession of Edward Huth, Esq. A photogravure may be found in Mr. Pollard's monograph *Henry VIII.*, 1902, (Goupil et Cie.).

Holbein's well-known study in chalk for this portrait is in His Majesty's collection at Windsor.

The family group by Holbein unfortunately no longer exists, though there are various copies extant, *e.g.*, one at Nostell Priory. Holbein's original sketch is, however, preserved at Basle.

## VII.

### THE BLESSED JOHN ROCHESTER AND THE BLESSED JAMES WALWORTH,

CARTHUSIANS.

*York, 11 May, 1537.*

Six Carthusians had now won their crowns, and the community still stood faithful ; alas ! a rare example in a time of general weakness, fear, compromise, or apostasy. What was to be done with them ? Henry probably shrank from wholesale execution because of the " universal horror,"<sup>1</sup> which he must have known the deaths of the martyrs had already excited in the country. Abroad, too, the indignation at the martyrdoms was intense. Thus Edmond Harvel writes to Thomas Starkey, Cromwell's secretary : " All Venice was in great murmuration to hear it . . . they consider their execution as against all honest laws of God and men, and as *novum atque inauditum*. I never saw Italians break out so vehemently at anything."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Gairdner's Preface to vol. viii. of *Letters and Papers*, p. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 874.

But the resources of persecution were not exhausted. Two lay commissaries were introduced into the convent without any pretence of law, with full powers. Their object appears to have been to harass and wear out the monks, who were henceforth deprived of even their usual penitential food, and given barely enough to preserve life. They were cut off from communication with friends and sympathizers;<sup>1</sup> rough and insolent strangers jostled them in their own corridors, jeering at and even striking them. Others came to entrap them into discussions, and attributing their constancy to the reading of the holy Fathers and Doctors, whom they quoted in defence of the Faith, stripped their cells of all their books. Still, the learning of some, and much more the innocence and simplicity of others, kept the community in the old ways of faith and observance, though they had now no Prior, or regular government. Happily, the tradition of holiness had been long and solidly established among them. For thirty years the house had been governed by the saintly Prior, William Tynbygh, an Irish monk, who died in 1531, leaving the memory of his sixty years of religious life in benediction. He suffered with heroic patience and humility many even bodily assaults of the evil one, was favoured with heavenly raptures, and was

<sup>1</sup> Whalley writes to Cromwell that he "has given charge that no persons, spiritual or temporal, shall come into the cloister to have communication with any of them unless they bring [Cromwell's] token, or Whalley knows them to be of an honest sort." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 601.)

rarely able to recite St. John's Gospel at the end of Mass without falling into ecstasy. At his death, after Prior Batmanson's six months' tenure of office, the convent had been for five years under the rule of Blessed John Houghton, of whom his Religious declared that even had he not been a martyr, he would have deserved to be enrolled among the saints.

The result was seen in the extraordinary fervour and perfection of the whole convent; with very few exceptions, all lived in charity and sought to bear each other's burdens. Solitude and silence were strictly observed. Until the troubles of the persecution no sound was heard in the corridors, and no one went outside the enclosure. Tears of devotion were a common gift, and a holy emulation in virtue reigned among them. Brothers and choir monks alike had the straitest poverty in honour, and practised great self-abjection; and two, named Brother Roger and Brother John, when prostrate on the ground in prayer, were seen by their brethren to be raised up into the air; whilst the holy Offices of the Church were performed with such care and recollection, that the citizens of London commonly said: "If you would hear the sacred service devoutly celebrated, go to the Charterhouse."

Holy observance had now become exceedingly difficult, in the midst of so many intrusions and interruptions. Often would some member of the Council come and harangue the Religious by the hour in the chapter-room, trying now threats now flattery, at times when they should have been singing



Vespers or Matins. In a word, Chauncy says that they never knew what it was to be free from vexation for a single hour of the day or night. All this was the systematic carrying out of the instructions of the King's commissaries, the original of which is still to be seen in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> They run thus :

AN ORDER FOR THE CHARTERHOUSE OF LONDON.

"First, that there be five or six governors of temporal men, learned, wise and trusty, appointed, whereof three or two of them shall be continually there together every meal, and lodge there every night.

"*Item*, that the said governors shall call all the monks before them, and all the other servants and officers of the house; and to show them that the King's grace hath pardoned them of all heresies and treasons by any of them committed before that day, giving them warning that if they eftsoons offend, to die without mercy. And that there be a pardon purchased for them all under the King's great seal.

"*Item*, that the said governors take the keys from the Procurator and other officers, and to govern the house and to receive all rents and to make all payments, and to be countable to the King's grace thereof.

"*Item*, that the said governors call all the monks to them severally, one after the other, at divers times, and to examine them of all their opinions,

<sup>1</sup> B.M. Cotton MSS. Cleopatra, iv. f. 27, apud Morris' *Troubles*, First Series, pp. 18, 19.

and to exhort them to the truth, showing them that if any of them will, he shall have a dispensation to leave that Order and to live otherwise, and to have convenient stipend for a year or two, till he have provided himself of a living, so that he conform himself to the King's laws, and to endeavour himself to learn and to preach the word of God, which every priest is bound to do, and yet by their Religion (as it is said) they have professed falsely the contrary, that none of them shall ever preach the word of God.

*"Item,* to put all the monks to the cloister for a season, and that no man speak to them but by the license of one of the said governors.

*"Item,* to take from them all manner of books wherein any error be contained, and to let them all have the Old Testament and the New Testament.

*"Item,* to cause them to show all their ceremonies, and to teach them and to exhort them to leave and to forsake all such ceremonies that be nought.

*"Item,* if they find any of them so obstinate that in nowise will be reformed, then to commit him to prison till the Council may take some other direction for them. And they that will be reformed, to sever them from the company of the obstinates, and to be gently handled to cause them to utter the secrets and mischiefs used among them.

*"Item,* there would be three or four times in every week during this visitation a sermon made by some discreet, well-learned men, and all the monks, officers and servants, to be caused to be there present, none exception save only sickness, and the

said preachers to have their chambers there and meat and drink, that they might quietly study there during that time.

“*Item*, the lay-brothers be more obstinate and more froward and more unreasonable than the monks; therefore they would be likewise examined, and the obstinates punished or expelled, and the others kept for a season for knowledge of divers points of them to be had.”

When this treatment had lasted for a year without success, the commissaries began to lose patience, and on the anniversary of their blessed Prior's martyrdom, four of the most influential of the monks were seized and sent off to distant houses of the Order. For two of the four it was the summons to martyrdom. These were Dom John Rochester and Dom James Walworth.<sup>1</sup> Of the latter but few details have survived. Dom Rochester is often mentioned in the course of the vexatious persecutions of the preceding year. In August of 1535, Cranmer sent for him, but evidently unable to move him, sent him back to the monastery. At another time William Marshall, a zealous agent of the schism, and John Maydwell, a fallen friar, made great efforts to tempt him, but were obliged to report that “they left him as they found him.” About the same time Bedyll and a Dr. Crome tried their hand on the faithful priest, and another religious, “by the space of an hour

<sup>1</sup> The name of the martyr is sometimes written Walwerke and Wannert.

and more; but it prevailed nothing; but they left those froward monks as erroneous as they found them, wherein was much lack of grace." The commissary, Jaspar Fylalle, who has recorded these particulars in a letter to Cromwell, induced the blessed man to read a book of William Marshall's, entitled *Defence of Peace*, but having read it, he burned it. One Sunday during the conventual Mass, he was carried by force, with the Blessed James Walworth and a third religious, to St. Paul's by Cromwell's orders, and there obliged to listen in a prominent position to a sermon preached by one of the Bishops in the sense of the Court. The two confessors were now sent to the monastery at Hull—with the double object of removing their example from the Charterhouse of London, and of placing them under an influence more favourable to the King's will: for, alas! the Carthusians of Hull had bent to the storm like so many others on every side. Here, however, they were as constant as they had been in London, and at length after some months they were brought before the Duke of Norfolk at York, and condemned to death on the charge that "on the eighth day of May, in the twenty-ninth year of the most illustrious and most Christian prince and our Lord Henry VIII. . . . and on divers days and times before . . . did separately, falsely and traitorously affirm, and each of them did affirm and say, that the said Lord, the King that now is, was not supreme head of the Church of England on earth, but that the Bishop of Rome was and is the supreme head of

the same on earth.”<sup>1</sup> The two holy martyrs were hanged on the 11th of May, 1537. For some unknown reason they were not disembowelled and quartered as the other martyrs were, but their bodies were left hanging in chains until they dropped limb from limb.

E. S. K.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Froude with characteristic inaccuracy, although in an otherwise sympathetic account of the Carthusian martyrs, states that the Blessed John Rochester and James Walworth were executed for taking part in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The original indictment is still to be read among the Cottonian MSS. in the British Museum (Cleop. E. vi. 231) and contains no other charge whatever than that quoted in the text.

## VIII.

### THE BLESSED THOMAS JOHNSON WITH EIGHT COMPANIONS, AND THE BLESSED WILLIAM HORNE,

CARTHUSIANS.

*London, June to September, 1537, and 4 August, 1540.*

THE despatch of the four Fathers of the London Charterhouse to the north on May 4, 1536, was only part of a plan for breaking up the community, in the hope of dealing with the separate members or groups more successfully. Accordingly eight other Fathers were now sent to the custody of the Bridgettine monks of Syon House. Here they were advised to yield and assured that the question of the Supremacy was not one for which they ought to incur death. Strange to say, this evil counsel was given them on his death-bed, by the Confessor General who had been the friend of the Blessed John Houghton, and had encouraged him to martyrdom. The religious were for the moment shaken, and no doubt on this account were allowed to return to their brethren, amongst whom however they quickly recovered their old firmness, to the anger and mortification of the commissaries.

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They were now threatened with the total suppression of the house if they remained obstinate. This threat was the last arrow in the quiver of the persecutors, and it is grievous to have to relate that it hit the mark in the case of a large number. When the persecution began, the community consisted of thirty choir monks and eighteen lay-brothers. We have seen eight enrolled in the glorious army of martyrs, and two others sent to another convent of the Order,<sup>1</sup> leaving twenty choir monks and eighteen brothers. Of this number, four choir monks and six brothers, ten in all, remained immovable in their fidelity. Sixteen choir monks and twelve brothers were at length prevailed on to yield. A few of them, five only, had been known as tepid or ill-disposed even in the old peaceful and regular days, and these would naturally be the most easily overcome. Upon the rest the long harassing persecution, the separation from those whose holiness of life and strength of character had been their support, the wide-spread contagion of weakness and compromise, and above all the hope of preserving their beloved monastery, told with overwhelming force.

Chauncy declares that they signed the Oath of Supremacy with remorse of conscience, and even with tears; that they inwardly protested to God

<sup>1</sup> These were Chauncy himself and Dom John Foxe. After spending more than a year at the Charterhouse of Beauvale, they were sent to Syon Abbey, where they were eventually induced to take the Oath of Supremacy about the end of November, 1537. They then returned to the London Charterhouse for the last few months of its existence.

that it was a false and iniquitous oath, and that they yielded only to violence; that they made verbal qualifications and reserves to which their oppressors assented, and that even when they kissed the book of the Holy Gospels they intended only to honour the Sacred Scriptures and not to invoke the testimony of God to their false profession. Nevertheless that which they did was the very act of heretical and schismatical profession, rather than make which their happier brethren had died. It was a triumph of the evil one and his instruments. The document remains to this day, a formal capitular act, under the common seal of the monastery, made in the presence of the Archdeacons of Cornwall and of London, and signed by William Trafford<sup>1</sup> as Prior, Edmund Sterne as Vicar, and eighteen other religious. This took place on the 18th of May, 1537.

But there was a glorious band who remained faithful to the end. Ten were summoned in vain to join the majority in the chapter-room and take the oath.<sup>2</sup> They were Dom Thomas Johnson, Dom Richard Bere, and Dom Thomas Green, priests, Dom John Davy, a professed choir monk, but only a deacon, and the Brothers Robert Salt, William

<sup>1</sup> It does not appear how or by whom Trafford was named Prior, but a letter from the Prior of Shene to Cromwell, dated April 23, 1535 (*Letters and Papers*, Henry VIII. vol. viii. n. 585), and written in his favour, speaks of him as "appointed Prior of the Charterhouse, Smithfield." This was immediately after the committal of Blessed John Houghton to the Tower. It is clear, however, that the monks did not regard him as their Prior.

<sup>2</sup> The notarial act certifying their refusal, and giving the list of their names, is printed in Rymer's *Fœdera*, tom. xiv. p. 588.



Greenwood, Thomas Redyng, Thomas Scryven, Walter Pierson and William Horne. It would seem that Brother Robert Salt had already endured specially hard treatment. A letter<sup>1</sup> in the Record Office from John Whalley, one of the commissaries intruded into the Charterhouse, begs Cromwell "that a brother of this house, named Salter [no doubt the same],<sup>2</sup> who has been in prison this twelvemonth and more, may be put at liberty in the cloister."

There was a short lull now of eleven days, and then on the 29th of May, 1537, all the ten Confessors were sent to Newgate. With the exception of Brother William Horne they were never brought to trial, and there is every ground for believing that it was intended the world should never hear of them again. We have seen the well-authenticated account of the treatment of Blessed Humphrey Middlemore, William Exmew and Sebastian Newdigate during the interval between their apprehension and trial. Such, with the addition of starvation, was the cruel martyrdom allotted to their ten brethren. They were chained standing and with their hands tied behind them to posts of the prison, and so left to perish. Their life was prolonged for a short time by the charitable devotion of a holy woman named Margaret Clement. As Margaret Giggs she had been brought

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 601.

<sup>2</sup> There was a monk of the house of the name of *Salter*, but he was a priest, not a Brother. Whalley probably confused the two similar names.

up by the Blessed Sir Thomas More with his daughter Margaret, sharing with her his lessons in Greek and Latin, and trusted by him with the knowledge of his secret penances. She was married from his house and he was godfather to her son, Thomas. She had always had a particular love for the Carthusian Order, and now at the risk of her life determined to try to help the sufferers. What followed cannot be better related than in the words of the touching Life of her daughter, Mother Margaret Clement, edited by Father Morris.<sup>1</sup>

“Bearing a singular devotion unto that holy Order, and moved with great compassion of those holy Fathers, she dealt with the gaoler that she might secretly have access unto them, and withal did win him with money, that he was content to let her come into the prison to them, which she did very often, attiring and disguising herself as a milkmaid, with a great pail upon her head full of meat, wherewith she fed that blessed Company, putting meat into their mouths, they being tied and not able to stir, nor to help themselves; which having done she afterwards took from them their natural filth.

“This pious work she continued for divers days, until at last the King inquiring of them if they were not dead, and understanding that they were not yet dead to his great admiration, commanded a straiter watch to be set over them, so that the keeper durst not let in this good woman any more,

<sup>1</sup> *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, First Series, p. 27.

fearing it might cost him his head if it should be discovered. Nevertheless, what with her importunity and by force of money, she obtained of him that he let her go up to the tiles right over the close prison where the blessed Fathers were. Oh rare example and courage of a woman! And so she, uncovering the ceiling or tiles over their heads, by a string let them down meat in a basket, approaching the same as well as she could unto their mouths as they did stand chained against the posts. But they not being able to feed themselves out of the basket, or very little, and the gaoler fearing very much that it should be perceived, in the end refused to let her come any more. And so, soon after, they languished and pined away, one after another, what with the stink and want of food and other miseries which they there endured."

The holy martyrs were not ungrateful for this touching charity. "Wednesday being now come, which was the day before she died, and asking if her daughter be come, and being told no, but that they looked for her every hour, she made answer that she would stay no longer for her, and calling her husband she told him that the time of her departure was now come, and she might stay no longer, for that there were standing about her bed the Reverend Fathers, monks of the Charterhouse, whom she had relieved in prison in England, and did call upon her to come away with them."<sup>1</sup>

One more glimpse has been providentially given

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

to us of the holy martyrs, in a letter to Cromwell from the execrable Archdeacon Bedyll, still to be read in the original in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup>

“My very good Lord,—After my most hearty commendations, it shall please your Lordship to understand that the monks of the Charterhouse here in London, which were committed to Newgate for their traitorous behaviour long time continued against the King’s grace, be almost despatched by the hand of God, as it may appear to you by the bill enclosed. Whereof considering their behaviour and the whole matter, I am not sorry, but would that all such as love not the King’s highness and his worldly honour were in like case. . . .”

The “bill enclosed” is as follows :

“There be departed: Brother William Grenewode, Dan John Davye, Brother Robert Salt, Brother Walter Pierson, Dan Thomas Greene.

“There be even at the point of death: Brother Thomas Scryven, Brother Thomas Redyng.

“There be sick: Dan Thomas Johnson, Brother William Horne.

“One is whole: Dan Bere.”

The date of this report is June the 14th; that is sixteen days after their lingering martyrdom had

<sup>1</sup> Cotton. MSS. Cleopatra, E. iv. f. 256. The whole letter is printed by Dom Hendriks, *The London Charterhouse*, pp. 226—228.

commenced. It cannot have been protracted for the survivors for many days.<sup>1</sup>

Chauncy relates that Cromwell was much put out when it was reported to him that the martyrs were dead. But the motive of his displeasure was that they were beyond his power, and he swore a great oath that he would have treated them more hardly if they had lived longer.<sup>2</sup>

Brother William Horne, wonderful to say, survived: but his crown was only delayed. He suffered for three or four years longer the hardships of imprisonment, and thus endured a severer martyrdom than all his brethren. He was brought to trial in 1540, or rather attainted, and condemned together with five other servants of God for denying the Royal Supremacy, and consummated his martyrdom at Tyburn on August 4, 1540, being hanged,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An old document quoted by Dom Hendriks (p. 228), corroborates Bedyll's letter in all particulars, and gives the days on which the Blessed Martyrs went to their reward: William Greenwood, June 6; John Davy, June 8; Robert Salt, June 9; Walter Pierson, June 10; Thomas Green, June 10; Thomas Scryven, June 15; Thomas Redyng, June 16; Richard Bere, August 9; Thomas Johnson, September 20. Cf. the original text in *Analecta Bollandiana*, xiv. p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Cromwell perhaps interfered on receiving this report, and ordered that those still living should be given food. This would account for the fact that Bere and Johnson lingered so long, though the cruel privations they had already endured brought on death before they could be carried to Tyburn. Blessed William Horne was the only one whom Cromwell saved for the executioner's knife.

<sup>3</sup> Chauncy gives the date of his martyrdom as November 4, 1541, but after the dispersion of the community he may easily have been misled by hearsay, and his statement therefore cannot outweigh that of Stow, supported by the fact that the other martyrs condemned with him all suffered either on the 30th of July or the

disembowelled, and quartered. De Marillac, writing two days later, mentions the touching circumstance that he could never be induced to quit his religious habit, which had been for some time suppressed throughout the land.

"Hereunto also pertaineth the example of Friar Bartley who, wearing still his friar's cowl after the suppression of religious houses, Cromwell coming into Paul's Churchyard and espying him in Keine's shop, 'Yes,' said he, 'will not that cowl of yours be left off yet? And if I hear by one o'clock that this apparel be not changed, thou shalt be hanged immediately for example to all others,' and so putting his cowl away, he durst never wear it after."<sup>1</sup> An example of Tudor tyranny from a quarter which will not be suspected of favouring the monks.

The instance of Blessed William Horne shows that Dodd and others are mistaken in supposing the martyr Thomas Empson, the Westminster monk, to have been the last who publicly wore the religious habit after the suppression.

It is worth remarking that the justice of God had overtaken Cromwell just a week before the death of the last of his Carthusian victims. He was beheaded on the 28th of July, 1540. The Charter-

4th of August, 1540. Dodd follows Stow, but erroneously gives the year as 1539. All doubt, however, is removed by a despatch of De Marillac, the French Ambassador (Jean Kauler, *Ambassades de France en Angleterre*, 1537—1542), dated August 6, in which he refers to the execution of a Carthusian on the Wednesday previous, which would be August the 4th.

<sup>1</sup> Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. v. Edit. 1846, p. 896.

house, for the sake of whose preservation so many of the monks had, at least outwardly, renounced the faith and unity of the Church, was "surrendered" on the 10th of June, 1537, and the remains of the once flourishing community, finally expelled on the 15th of November, 1538. Some of the monks were replaced in the convent at Shene under Queen Mary, and Dom Chauncy was elected their Prior in 1556. On Mary's death they were allowed to retire to Flanders, and after various wanderings finally settled at Nieuport. Chauncy died on the 12th of July, 1581, at Bruges, whilst the Nieuport monastery was being prepared for the community. The Nieuport house was suppressed by the Emperor Joseph II., June 30, 1783, and unhappily the community thus died out. The last Prior, Dom Joseph Williams, died at Little Malvern, June 2, 1797.

E. S. K.

[Blessed Richard Bere was a nephew of Richard Bere, Abbot of Glastonbury (1493—1525), the predecessor of Blessed Richard Whiting. He was probably born about 1508, and his father seems to have been a tenant on the Glastonbury estates. He was brought up in the abbey school and in his uncle's time is said to have been "always going and coming to the abbey." He is described as being "a good big stripling, and a well-grown young man." From Glastonbury the Abbot sent him to Oxford, and thence sent for him to marry Jane Samuel his ward.

But Richard had other inclinations, and became a monk shortly afterwards "to avoid this marriage." The bride was about eight or nine years old at the time. Before entering the Charterhouse, Richard went to study "to the Inns of Court or Chancery in London." He abandoned his legal studies and became a Carthusian, February 20, 1523. He is said to have died in Newgate, August 9, 1537. The above details are gathered from the report of a trial held in 1568, about succession to some property, a relative of Jane Samuel claiming the estate on the ground that she had not been lawfully married to a Mr. Pyke, to whose descendants the estate had come, because she was before married to Richard Bere. The case was dismissed by the court as there was only hearsay evidence for the alleged marriage with the martyr, and at the time Jane Samuel was under twelve years of age.<sup>1</sup>

The martyr Dom Thomas Green is evidently to be identified with Dr. Thomas Greenwood, who in 1515 was elected Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, the foundation of Blessed John Fisher. He had studied first in Oxford, where he took his B.A. degree, and then transferred himself to Cambridge, where he took his M.A. in 1511, and his D.D. in 1532. The early biographer of Fisher calls him "that famous martyr, Dr. Greenwood;" and the Harleian MS., n. 7030, fol. 53, explicitly says: "Collegium D. Joannis suum agnoscit D. Doctorem Greenwoodum, Ordinis Carthusiani monachum, qui in causa primatus regii, cum reli-

<sup>1</sup> *Downside Review*, vol. ix. p. 158, 1890.



quis sui Ordinis sub Henrico VIII. martyrium subiit.”<sup>1</sup>

The change of the name Greenwood to Green, is perhaps to be accounted for because the community already numbered one of the former name, that is, the lay-brother, *William Greenwood*.—ED.]

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortroy, *Vie de Fisher*, pp. 41, 49, 126. Cf. Hendriks, pp. 223 and 228; Cooper, *Athena Cantabrigienses*, vol. i. p. 64.

## IX.

### THE BLESSED JOHN STONE, *AUGUSTINIAN.*

*Canterbury, 12 May, 1538.*

WHILST the ancient religion flourished in our land, the metropolitan city of Canterbury was, as might be expected, a place in which the various Regular Orders were desirous to establish houses of their institutes. The Benedictines had their great Abbey of St. Augustine, as well as the Cathedral Priory of Christ Church. The different Orders of Friars, the Carmelites, Dominicans and Franciscans, had likewise their own establishments, and amongst others the Augustinians, in their two branches of Canons Regular and Hermits or Friars, were settled there from an early date.<sup>1</sup> The Canons held the Church of St. Gregory, from a period but little after the Norman Conquest, and the Friars had a home in the parish of St. George from the year 1325, in the reign of Edward II.

The house had attained a certain celebrity as the convent of the learned John Capgrave, the writer of valued commentaries on various books of

<sup>1</sup> Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, pp. 210, 225.

Holy Scripture and of the Lives of the Saints, so well known as the *Nova Legenda*. But a still greater honour to the house and to the Order, was that it should have been the religious home of the Blessed John Stone, one of the martyrs for the Faith under Henry VIII.

It is well known how eager the King was to gain the sanction of learned men and of those esteemed highly by the nation to his unholy and schismatical projects. Wealth and honours were offered to those who complied. Those who resisted the tyrant's will were threatened with his terrible vengeance. Similar preludes, according to the traditions of the Order, preceded the martyrdom of Blessed John Stone.

We are told that he was a Doctor in Theology, in great repute for his learning and still more esteemed for the sanctity of his life, one of those, in a word, who, if he could have been won over to the unrighteous cause, would have greatly influenced public opinion in favour of the King's designs.

What measures were taken to bring about this desired end, we are not told; but whether they were promises or threats or both, they signally failed to shake the constancy of the servant of God. The result was that he was thrown into prison, and as his execution was delayed till the later period of Henry's persecution, it is possible that his confinement lasted for several years.

But, far from being daunted by this cruelty, we find that he added voluntary mortifications to his enforced sufferings.

Nicholas Harpsfield, Archdeacon of Canterbury, in his work published under the name of Alan Cope,<sup>1</sup> less than thirty years after the martyrdom of the holy friar, records an account he had heard from a most credible witness, an intimate friend of Stone's, of a preternatural occurrence which took place during the time of his imprisonment. "While he was yet in prison before his martyrdom, it happened that on one occasion, when he was offering his fervent prayers to God, after an uninterrupted fast of three days, he heard a voice, but without seeing the presence of any one, calling him by name and exhorting him to be of good courage and not to hesitate to suffer with constancy for the truth of the opinion which he had professed. The consequence of this heavenly message was, that the holy man thenceforth felt in himself such a renewal of force and alacrity, that no persuasions and no terrors could avail to disturb the resolution with which he maintained his devotion."

The circumstances of the martyrdom have not reached us in detail; but a strange light has been thrown on the event by the recent publication of the Ninth Report of the Historical MSS. Commission.<sup>2</sup>

In the account-book of the City Chamberlain of Canterbury, we have the various charges, to which the Corporation was put, for the execution of the iniquitous sentence.

We are told the cost of the timber for the

<sup>1</sup> Alan Cope, *Dialogi Sex*. Antwerp, 1566. Dial. vi. p. 995.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical MSS. Commission*, Ninth Report, App. p. 153.

gallows, the wages of the carpenter, of the men who digged the holes and fixed the gallows, of the drink with which they refreshed themselves, and of the carriage of the gibbet from Stablegate to the Dongeon, now called Dane John, which was not the usual place of execution, but was in this case chosen for some reason unknown. Then come the hurdle, the horse to drag it, "two half-penny halters," the wood for the fire, the kettle in which the quarters were to be parboiled, the hire of the men who were to take the quarters to the city gates, the women to scour the kettle, and lastly, the executioner.

In this matter-of-fact manner, as a question of shillings and pence, are mentioned the instruments, now to become sacred, by which this glorious martyrdom was to be consummated, and those holy limbs hereafter to be glorified in Heaven. *Posuerunt morticina servorum tuorum, escas volatilibus cæli; carnes sanctorum tuorum, bestiis terræ.*<sup>1</sup> *Carnes sanctorum tuorum, et sanguinem ipsorum effuderunt in circuitu Jerusalem, et non erat qui sepeliret*<sup>2</sup>—"They have given the dead bodies of thy servants to be meat for the fowls of the air; the flesh of thy saints for the beasts of the earth." "The flesh of thy saints and the blood of them they have shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them."

The date of this martyrdom has not been accurately determined. In the new Office the day is given as iv. Idus. Maii, *i.e.*, the 12th of May, 1538. In some authors it is said to have taken place soon

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Mach. vii. 17.

after that of the Blessed John Forest. In reality, however, it seems to have occurred more than a year later.<sup>1</sup>

In the city account-book already referred to, the other entries relate to the year 1539-40. Days are not specified, but the charges for the execution are mentioned between certain expenses in preparation for the visit of Anne of Cleves, and the outlay incurred by her reception, which was on the 29th of December. From this the inference is made that the Blessed John Stone received the martyr's crown about the month of December, 1539. But as accounts are sometimes sent in some time after debts are incurred, this conclusion still needs confirmation.

There can scarcely be a doubt that Blessed John Stone is the person referred to by Ingworth, one of the King's visitors, who was at the Austin Friars of Canterbury on the 14th of December, 1538. He complains of his insolence, and that he "still held and still desired to die for it, that the King may not be head of the Church of England." He first sequestered him, and forbade any one to speak to him, and then determined to send him up to Cromwell.<sup>2</sup> He was therefore probably a year in prison.

R. S.

<sup>1</sup> Fra Girolamo Pollini, O.P., gives the date May 12, 1538, on the authority of P. Luigi Torelli, O.S.A. (*Historica Ecclesiastica della Rivoluzione d'Inghilterra*. Rome, 1594.)

<sup>2</sup> Gasquet, ii. p. 259.

X.

**THE BLESSED JOHN FOREST,**

*FRANCISCAN.*

*Smithfield, 22 May, 1538.*

THE Observant Friars in England at the time of their suppression, fully deserved their name. Observant of the Rule of the Seraphic St. Francis, they had no fear of him whose power went no further than the death of the body. The commissioners sent by Henry VIII. to draw them into a recognition of the Royal Supremacy, failed signally in their endeavour to lead them into schism. Their houses were emptied by the King's orders, and about two hundred of the well-known and highly respected Grey Friars were cast into prison. Of these fifty died in chains of the hardships to which they had been subjected. Amongst these were the Venerable Servants of God, Anthony Brookby, Thomas Belchiam, and Thomas Cort. This is not the place for the scanty records of the sufferings of these holy martyrs. At present we are concerned only with such details as can now be put together of the holy life and glorious death of the one Franciscan Friar who shares in the honours of the beatified English Martyrs.

Our first information respecting Blessed John Forest is that at the age of seventeen he entered the Franciscan Monastery at Greenwich, the fervent house of which Friar William Peto was Guardian. From this monastery, after long years spent in religious training, he was sent to Oxford at the age of twenty-six to study theology in the house of the Franciscans without Watergate, in the suburbs to the south of Oxford. How long he remained in this seat of learning, or what degrees he took, we do not know.<sup>1</sup> Our next information about him is that in 1525 he was commanded by Cardinal Wolsey to preach at St. Paul's Cross. The occasion was that the Cardinal, in virtue of his legatine authority, had proposed to Dr. Henry Standish, formerly their Provincial and now Bishop of St. Asaph, to make a visitation of the Observant Franciscans at Greenwich. Some of the friars resisted this, as a breach of the exemption conferred upon them by Pope Leo X., and showed their displeasure by going to other places. We are told that Friar Forest, in his sermon at St. Paul's Cross, "pronounced them all accursed that went out of the place." From this some writers have concluded that he must have been their Provincial, or he could not have excommunicated his brethren. But it is by no means clear that he excommunicated any one or threatened excommunication. By the authority of the Cardinal Legate he declared that the punishment of excommunication passed by the law on all religious who leave their monastery without due permission, had

<sup>1</sup> He is called Doctor in his last disputation.



been incurred by those who had left their house as a protest against the visitation of the Legate. And indeed, nothing can be plainer than that the nineteen friars, who did so, were in the wrong, however good might have been their intention. There is no need, on this ground alone, to assume that Friar Forest was ever Provincial of the English Franciscans; nor, on the other hand, need we be surprised at the part taken by him against his brethren in religion. They were an erring minority and it was but right that one whose position evidently justified him in so speaking, should show them that they were mistaken. Some of the fugitives were imprisoned for a time in the Cardinal's palace, under charge of his porter. This sermon was preached on Sunday, January 22, 1525, the first date in the life of Blessed John Forest to which we can trust. Later on he became, as it seems, a regular preacher at St. Paul's Cross, the chief pulpit of England in those days, but no details about his sermons are preserved.

The next thing that we hear is that he was confessor to Queen Catherine of Arragon. It is natural to suppose that he would have discharged this office during such times as the Queen resided at Greenwich. After her final separation from Henry at the close of 1529, she does not seem to have returned there, and all intercourse with Friar Forest must have ceased to be regular or frequent. But the Queen, whose love for the Observant Friars was such that the first clause of her will was a petition to be buried in one of their convents, was not without the consolation of seeing them some-

times during her time of tribulation. A letter to the King respecting the doings of the "Princess Dowager," as he ordered her to be called, has the following paragraph.

"Item, as concerning the Friars Observants, they came at divers feasts and at sundry places many times to confess the ladies and gentlewomen, and sometime they said it was their way from one of their houses to another. As many names as I did know I shall declare: Riche, Peto, Sebastyan, Curon, Covert, Robynson, Fforest, and Neswick, with divers other."

When the religious troubles became acute, complaints were heard against Forest, but they are such that, taken as a whole, they make decidedly in the Friar's favour. The letters which we shall now quote, are part of a series of denunciations brought against the Observant Order. Its members, and especially the friars of the Greenwich Convent of which Forest seems to have been Warden, had been supporters of Queen Catherine. In this they only followed the example of almost all Englishmen of that day, but they were exceptional in their noble freedom of speech, whilst all about them were infected with a wretched servility. In his earlier and better years Henry had specially befriended these friars, and constantly attended their churches, as his royal father had done before him. Even now, though the idea of suppressing them had come early into his mind, there were moments when his better nature reasserted itself.

The writers, to whom allusion has just been made, were Father John Laurence, and the lay-brother, Richard Lyst. They began with attempts to supplant Forest in the royal favour, they ended with requesting permission to leave their Order. The origin of the division was this. On Easter day, 1532, Friar William Peto, afterwards Cardinal, and then Provincial of the Observants, had denounced Henry's advisers from the Greenwich pulpit, and on the next Sunday when Curwin, the Court preacher, replied to the charge, he was answered from the rood-loft by Friar Elstow. Both were imprisoned and had to leave the country.<sup>1</sup> Then Laurence preached in favour of the King's divorce, his brothers in religion expressed their dissatisfaction, and he made an appeal for protection against them to Cromwell. It should be added that the Minister did not invariably receive Laurence's complaints with pleasure, nor those of Lyst, both of whom sometimes have to apologize for the trouble they have caused.

The following points are those which chiefly

<sup>1</sup> The story is fully told in the later editions of Stow's *Chronicle*, and of his *Summaries*. In the first edition of 1580 he had mentioned Forest's name instead of Peto's, an error corrected later on. But the mistake, as will appear at the end of this life, had in the meantime been copied into the later editions of Sander's *De Schismate*, and has led many of Forest's biographers to believe that he was in prison for several years before his death.

From Chapuys' account of the incident, written April 16, 1532 (*Letters and Papers*, v. n. 941), we see that Stow's date, May 28, 1532, is incorrect. Peto's sermon took place on Easter day, *i.e.*, March 31, 1532. Something similar is related of Friar Peerson by Lyst. (*Ibid.* vi. n. 168.)

concern us in the letters of these worthies. In August, 1532, a Chapter of the Order was held, in which Forest warned his brethren that the King was already so offended with them, that he had thought of suppressing their Order throughout England; but that he, Forest, had "put the King by his purpose," that is, had prevailed upon him to change his mind. As a compromise a new Commissary General would be sent from France, to visit or to rule the Province. In effect, the General of the Order, after having first proposed Father Jehan de la Haye, a friar who had on a previous occasion discharged this office in England to the King's satisfaction, finally sent a Frenchman from Lorraine, who would be even less suspect of bias towards Queen Catherine than de la Haye, who was a friend of the Emperor. In effect the Frenchman came and made some regulations to prevent any imprudent irritation of the King.<sup>1</sup>

All this reflects no little credit on Forest, who, it is clear, played a considerable part in these conciliatory measures, without in any way compromising his own high principles. His despicable accusers say that he "boasted" and "rejoiced" at the success of the negotiations. On February the 4th, Lyst meanly warned Cromwell that Forest would return to the King on the Saturday following, and betrayed his purposes in order that they might be crossed. That Forest should have managed under these circumstances to maintain himself in the King's favour, even if only for a time, is a fact which says

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, v. nn. 1591, 715; vi. nn. 36, 334.

much for his ability, his greatness of mind, and for his powers of persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

When Forest went back to Court, he found both the King and Cromwell well primed with accusations, and his audience was most unfavourable. After he returned, he summoned the community to the chapter-house, told them of the bad reception he had met with, and warned them again, as it would seem, of the dangers before them.<sup>2</sup>

In Lent, the French friar arrived with faculties of Visitor from the General of the Order. The English Fathers immediately elected him Minister of the Province as well, so that he had full powers for doing anything the situation might require, and the first thing that was requisite was the removal of Friar Forest. The repeated accusations of Laurence and Lyst had made this inevitable. Lyst had written "a long epistle" to Cromwell, containing all the charges he could bring together against his Warden, and he afterwards laid another copy of the same accusations before the commissary. The previous denunciation to Cromwell made it of course a matter of necessity to sacrifice Forest, at least to some extent. Indeed, so wrongly were things now ordered, that it would seem as though the destiny of the noblest Father in the province were decided by the whim of the basest brother. In April, Lyst

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, v. nn. 1591; vi. nn. 115, 116.

<sup>2</sup> This is the interpretation we should probably put upon Lyst's ill-natured charge that Forest "turned the charge from himself to the whole religion." February 18, 1533. (*Letters and Papers*, vi. n. 168.)

had told Cromwell that the future martyr deserved "to be removed to Newcastle or Newark:" in May, the same writer says that his "long epistle" was "laid to Forest's charge, *and so* he was deposed and sent to another convent in the North."<sup>1</sup>

How long he remained there we do not know, but he would at least have been relieved from attending at the baptism of Elizabeth by Cranmer in his own former church at Greenwich, on the 10th of September, 1533, a ceremony of fatal omen, not only to all Catholics, but especially to those who, like Forest, had actively resisted the King's adultery. Our next certain news of him is that he was in prison, in London, about the end of the year 1534. It is possible that he was accused of having supported the Maid of Kent, in 1533, though his name does not appear in any paper relating to her which has been published hitherto.<sup>2</sup> But it is more probable that his imprisonment was connected

<sup>1</sup> Lyst to Cromwell, April 12 and May 20, 1533, *Letters and Papers*, vi. nn. 334, 512. Lyst, who had previously advised the suppression of his own convent, begs in this last letter for permission to abandon his Order, which he soon did.

<sup>2</sup> Friar Laurence, who had been one of Forest's principal accusers, gave evidence against the Maid (*Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 1369), and against Forest's friends, Friars Riche and Risby, Observants like himself. The latter were arraigned with her, and eventually suffered with her on the 20th of April, 1534. Before this, Laurence had asked to have one of the posts vacated by their imprisonment (vol. ii. n. 139), and then he begged permission to leave the Order altogether, because, forsooth, he had made himself unpopular with his religious brethren, by telling them that they might all have been executed but for the King's great mercy. (*Ibid.* n. 580.)

with the total suppression of the Order in the latter half of 1534.

It will be remembered that the King had spoken of doing this in the August of 1532, and that Forest had then dissuaded him. Since then, Henry's downward course had been rapid, and by the spring of 1534, the Pope having pronounced against him, he was ready for extreme measures.

The brave Observant friars were those he feared the most. In the spring, special Visitors were sent to induce them to submit voluntarily to the King's will, and on their refusal, this whole branch of the Franciscan Order was suppressed. The convents do not seem to have been immediately secularized, but to have been handed over to other religious, in some instances to Augustinians, whilst the friars were sent to convents professing a less austere form of the Franciscan rule. A considerable number who refused to change their habits were cast into prison, some being confined among the common malefactors, some consigned to the punishment cells of other religious houses.

Here, in some cases, they suffered more than in the common dungeons, for many monasteries were now under the King's immediate management, the suppression of all smaller monasteries was in contemplation, and it would have been advisable to show the future victims what the consequences of resistance would be. According to Bouchier, 200 friars were imprisoned, and fifty died of their sufferings, round numbers which derive a good deal of support from the only official report we possess

on the subject. It is obviously incomplete, but accounts for thirty-two deaths among 143 friars. It is this document which describes Forest as "in London, in prison there."<sup>1</sup>

Forest then, at a date not earlier than the end of 1534, was certainly in prison. After this there comes a dearth of dated documents, and then, early in 1538, we certainly find him free again and in the Convent of the Grey Friars at Smithfield. In this mean space, possibly indeed quite early in 1534, we have some undated but deeply interesting correspondence between Friar Forest, then still in durance, and three of his former penitents, Queen Catherine of Arragon, her lady-in-waiting, Elizabeth Hammon, and Dr. Thomas Abel, once Catherine's chaplain, and to be a martyr six years later. Reserving the latter letters until we come to Abel's life, we may translate the others at once, from the oldest text of them that we possess.

"My venerated Father,—You who have been accustomed to advise others in doubtful cases, know best what advice to give to yourself; and with your piety and learning you know without doubt, and even desire if need be for the Name of Christ, to undergo death and refuse nothing in such a cause. Be brave then and courageous, for if in these torments you have some pain to bear, you will receive an eternal reward, which if any one were to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vii. n. 1607. There is nothing in this document to show whether he was confined in an ecclesiastical or civil prison.



be ready to lose, both you and I would count him to be mad. But alas, you leave me, your daughter, born to you in the Wounds of Christ, for a time at least you leave me in the greatest sorrow, for I am losing in you the man who has taught me the most in divine things, as he is himself excellently furnished with knowledge and piety. If I may freely say what my wish is, I had rather go before you through a thousand torments than follow you after a time. But if every one might have what he desires, who is there who would live on in hope? Wherefore I gladly give up my own will, leaving everything to Him who left us His example, preferring to renounce His own Will rather than follow it, saying, 'Thy Will be done.' You then will go before me, and by your prayers you will secure for me that I may follow you by the same road, with I hope, a braver and more constant soul. Go forward then, and certainly you know that however great may be the torments you bear, I share in them. They without doubt will give you the incorruptible crown which is prepared for all those who strive for Christ, if only now you bear bravely the torments they put you to. Remember your noble and ancient family,<sup>1</sup> which will urge you on to bear a generous death for Christ. If your family is noble, disgrace it not by yielding to the King's

<sup>1</sup> The family of Forest does not seem to have borne any title in England; in France, however, a house of that name was both ancient and ennobled. I have never seen any attempt to trace John Forest's genealogy, but in the life of the late Père Alberic de Forresta, S.J., a claim of kinship with the martyr was advanced but not demonstrated.

wicked request. I know that you think so much of the dignity of your Order that you make small account of this world's nobility, which is little enough when virtue is absent. Give back your body with great glory to its Creator because you have so long led a holy life under your poor Franciscan habit. And now whilst I your obedient daughter think what grief is coming to me on your account, I know not what to say, chiefly for this that you leave me without any consolation, so that my habitation and expectation in this world can be nothing but misery and a mere death in life. Yet I trust in the Lord, to whom I have said, 'Thou art my portion in the land of the living.' In that land I hope that I shall see you not very long hence, when the storms of this life shall be over, and I shall be taken to the calm life of the blessed. With these words I bid you farewell, my honoured Father. Commend me always in this life to God in your prayers, and I hope to be still more consoled by them when you have attained your place in Heaven. Your most sorrowful daughter,

"CATHERINE."

Such is "the tenor" of Queen Catherine's letter as it is given by Bouchier, who was the first to print it. The version of the same letter published in the second edition of Sander's book on the English Schism is much the same in sense, but very different in form. One or the other is a very free translation, if one ought not rather to say paraphrase. The same remark holds good with the letters that follow.

Friar Forest thus answered Queen Catherine :

" Most Serene Lady and Queen, my daughter most dear in the bowels of Christ,—I received your letters by the hands of your young servant Thomas, and when I read them I was filled with incredible joy, because I saw how great is your constancy in the Faith of your holy Mother the Church. In this, if you persevere, without doubt you will attain salvation. Doubt not of me that by any inconstancy I should disgrace my grey hairs. Meanwhile I earnestly beseech you that you would steadfastly pray for me to God, for whose spouse we suffer torments, to receive me into His glory. For it have I striven these four and forty years that I have passed in the Order of St. Francis. Now that I am in my sixty-fourth year I am no longer necessary to the people ; wherefore I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Meanwhile do you keep free from the pestilent doctrine of the heretics, so that if even an angel should come down from Heaven and bring you another doctrine from that which I have taught you, you must give no credit to his words but reject him ; for if he should teach you another doctrine, he does not come from God.<sup>1</sup>

" These few words you must take in lieu of

<sup>1</sup> Compare this with the following words taken from his last speech : " If an angell should come downe from heaven, and shew him any other thing then he had beleevved all his liffe tyme past he would not beleeeve him, and that if his bodie should be cutt joynt after joynt or membre after membre, brent, hanged, or what paine soever might be donne to his bodie, he would never turne from his old sect of this Bishopp of Rome." (Wriothesley's *Chronicle*, p. 80.)

consolation; but that you will receive from our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I specially commend you, to my Father Francis, to St. Catherine; and when you hear that I am being executed, I heartily beg of you to pray for me to her. With these words I bid you farewell. I send you my rosary as I have but three days to live.”<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth Hammon, “one of the Queen’s ladies,” also wrote to Friar Forest, her letter, possibly, accompanying the Queen’s. This letter, we are told, was sent to him when he was in Newgate.

“My most honoured Father,—It is impossible for me to say how much my serene mistress and Queen and I are afflicted at the news we hear of your severe sufferings, and this the more because we are deprived of all consolation; so that my mistress does nothing but weep and pray. If it is in any way possible that you may escape by the intervention of friends, I pray you leave us not orphans, for I fear lest my mistress the Queen, moved by so great a loss, should fall into some grave disease and die. This is the more likely because the King’s anger seems to the Queen quite past bearing. Last Monday the King’s officers came, to search for I know not what; and they so

<sup>1</sup> Though we do not know that Forest was ever under sentence of death before 1538, yet there were many occasions on which he might have believed himself doomed. As Queen Catherine died on the 6th of January, 1536, at Kimbolton, these letters cannot have been written to her in 1538.

frightened us with their threats that we know not what course to take. We cannot think what the King wanted by terrifying us so. At least this I beg of you that you would pray to God for me and Dorothy Lichfield, who heartily salutes you. Farewell, and pray for us to the Lord God."

The martyr's answer to this letter shows what he thought of the well-meant proposal that he should try to make his escape.

"Elizabeth Hammon, my child, I am very sorry for the great grief of your mistress and yourself on account of the pains I suffer, as if there were no resurrection to glory. Amongst the good things I have taught you, there is nothing I have pressed upon you more than this; if indeed there was ever anything taught by me more earnestly than this, be sure that I went far wrong. If I were willing to break faith, and through fear of torments or love of riches were to give myself to the devil, beyond doubt I could easily escape; but pray think of none of these things. Learn then to suffer for Christ's truth, and to die for His spouse, thy mother the Church, and do not try to lead me away from these torments, by which I hope to obtain eternal happiness.

"I pray you to follow your mistress the Queen, imitating the virtuous example you see in her, and pray for me, that as the torments they think of inflicting on me are but little, they may make them sharper."

It is impossible to peruse this correspondence without being impressed by the humanity and the love of right and goodness which animated the Queen and her lady; and without appreciating better the strength and courage of the good friar. It is indeed to be regretted that we hear nothing at all about the originals. We do not even know the language in which Catherine's letter was written. Nor can we vouch for the minute fidelity of the translations, which may have passed from Spanish to English, then to Latin, and now back to English again. Bouchier was not beyond his age in criticism, and men of that day allowed themselves much freedom in translating, especially when they only professed to give the *tenor*, the *modus* of the document they were copying. Be this as it may, the letters addressed to Forest have all the ring of genuineness about them; and though the letters said to be written by him show a boldness which might almost seem unreal, yet we see from the passage of Wriothesley, whose authority cannot under the circumstances be questioned, that the strongest phrases here ascribed to Forest were not as forcible as those which he in fact made use of at the most terrifying moments which immediately preceded his death, words which would hardly have risen to his lips then, had he not frequently repeated them before.

After the letters just quoted, which we have ascribed to 1534, but which may belong to 1535, we have no information about Forest's doings for three or four years. Then we find him living at the

Grey Friars Convent in London, at such liberty as other priests and religious could then enjoy. The Observants as an Order had by then been suppressed, as we have heard, and Forest had naturally taken refuge in a convent of the Friars Minor, or Conventuals, that branch of the great Franciscan family which was most closely connected with the Observants. These Grey Friars had a great church and convent on the North Side of Newgate Street,<sup>1</sup> which was then presided over by Thomas Chapman, a nominee, as it would seem, of the Crown. Subjection to such a man cannot have been to Forest's taste, but evidence will incidentally appear to prove that he lived quietly, giving no offence, continuing to keep his austere rule as well as he could, and that he still worked fruitfully among souls.

But before we come to that evidence, two matters must be discussed, which are really preliminary to it. In the first place, we notice that many recent biographers overlook Forest's liberation, and state that he was in prison for the four years which preceded his death. But this statement, with all the deductions made from it, must be considered quite untenable. Not only does all available contemporary evidence (in this case hostile evidence) point to Forest having been free, but all the early Catholic biographers agree upon this

<sup>1</sup> The old structure was destroyed in the great fire, but Christ Church has been rebuilt on the choir of the old Franciscan church, and Christ's Hospital, the Blue-Coat School, now to be replaced by an extension of the Post Office, stood on the site of the convent.

point. Moreover, both Catholic and non-Catholic authorities, as we shall see, are in all but complete agreement as to the treachery by which Forest eventually lost that liberty not long before his martyrdom.

The unwitting cause of the erroneous statements made by the later writers appears to have been Father Robert Persons, S.J. In 1586 he re-edited and expanded Dr. Nicholas Sander's *De Schismate Anglicano*, and in a well-meant endeavour to rectify Bouchier's chronology, he himself fell into the mistake here described, a mistake which has, unfortunately, been very frequently copied.<sup>1</sup> An attempt will be made at the end of this life to explain the probable origin of Persons' error.

The second matter we have to face is one necessarily growing out of the point just noted. How, it may be asked, did Forest get out from the prison in which, as we have seen, he was incarcerated in 1534? And to this question another may be at once appended. Can it be that he took the oath of supremacy to the King in order to escape from durance?

We know that from the time of Forest's imprisonment onwards, that is, from the end of 1534 at least, the oath of the Royal Supremacy was being presented to all, and it is hard to conceive how he, of all people, should have been released, without either having submitted to that test, or without having said or signed something which his adversaries would regard as swearing the oath.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 278, note.



On their side they definitely accuse him of having taken it, as we see by his so-called "confessions," soon to be quoted in full. Moreover, they add that he afterwards excused himself, saying that he had only sworn "by the outer man, not by the inner man." We have also lately heard that several of the Carthusians—that is, those who in the end shrank from martyrdom—though they had once shown courage apparently not less than Forest's, did take the oath under restrictions of the same or similar character. Queen Catherine seems to have feared that he might descend to some compromise.

On the other hand, we must set the opinion of Forest's Catholic biographers—Garzias, Fra Marcos of Lisbon, and Bouchier<sup>1</sup>—that he never took the oath at all. Unfortunately these men were far from having exhaustive or even complete information about the events of Forest's life. Their negative statements can only be taken as authoritative for the periods and events of which they had cognizance, and they knew nothing of Forest's first imprisonment or of his so-called confessions. Under these circumstances, their evidence cannot be considered to outweigh the precise charges of Forest's accusers; though these should of course only be received with great suspicion, and only so far as other circumstances seem to warrant or to compel their acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> More will be said of these authors at the end of this life. Garzias will be quoted in Major Hume's edition, *A Chronicle of England*; Fra Marcos da Lisboa (*vere da Silva*), afterwards Bishop of Oporto, from the Spanish edition of 1569; Bouchier from the Paris edition of 1582.

Regretfully leaving this difficulty only half solved, we may now take our last look at Forest before the proceedings which led to his martyrdom began. John Lord Mordaunt made his Easter confession to him, and about this we possess the following deposition :

“Memorandum, that—about the xxiii day of February, the xxixth year of the reign of our most dread sovereign lord, King Henry the Eighth, by the grace of God, of England and of France King, Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland, and in earth Supreme Head of the Church of England,—the Lord Mordaunt showed one Sir William Hemmyng, priest and chaplain to the said Lord, that he the said Lord was minded before his departure from London for to be confessed, and thereupon sent the said Sir William Hemmyng to the Grey Friars for to know what ghostly Fathers there did use for to hear confessions. Whereupon the said Sir William according to the same commandment went to the said Friars, to the porter of the place there, and inquired for one Friar Robyns, who before had been ghostly Father to the said Lord Mordaunt on one or two several times, as the said Lord remembereth; which porter made answer that he was not there, but was departed from thence.

“Whereupon the said Sir William demanded of the said porter what other good ghostly Fathers were there that used for to hear confessions. Who made answer and said that there was one Friar

Forest. And then the said Sir William inquired further of the same porter whether he used for to hear any confessions. Who answered and said 'Yes.' And then the said Sir William said, 'My Lord, my master, will be confessed.' And then the said porter said again, 'I think if he come about nine of the clock he may speak with him, for he saith our Lady Mass.'

"Whereupon the said Lord Mordaunt went to the Friars and was confessed of the same Friar Forest. And after confession the said Lord said to the said Friar Forest, 'I perceive ye take no money; look what ye belike and I will give you forty pence for to buy it with.' Whereupon the said Friar Forest desired the said Lord to cause it to be delivered to the porter for to buy coal. And the said Lord tarried thereafter a Mass time.

"And within a day or two after the said Lord sent the same sum of money by the said Sir William to the said porter, for to bestow it accordingly for coals; and then the said Sir William desired the said Lord that he would reward the porter. Whereupon the said Lord sent him as he remembereth two groats or twelve pence, and this was all the acquaintance that the said Lord had ever with the said Friar Forest.

"And as for the Bishop of Rome, or any speaking with the said Friar Forest of the said Bishop of Rome, or in any manner further concerning the said Bishop or his authority, or of any matter touching the King's Majesty, or the Bishop of Rome, there was no such matter touched

upon or moved by the Friar or by the said Lord or either of them.

“JOHN MORDAUNT.”<sup>1</sup>

This document should be read in connection with the letter of the Warden of the Grey Friars at London, which will be noticed immediately. Both of them were elicited by the desire to find some fault with the zealous friar. Both of them (so far as they go) show that no blame could be found except that which an enemy of monasticism could gather from his having observed his rule, especially that of poverty, with a constancy worthy of a true son of St. Francis. His regularity in this is so well known and recognized, that alms are offered to him in kind, and for the house's use. The money is not paid in to him. He is also regular in saying our Lady's Mass, and is a popular confessor, ready to attend to any penitent who may need his services.

A casual reader of the document just quoted would perhaps hardly suspect the malicious intention to which it owes its origin. The Government was endeavouring to make Forest's penitents give evidence that would lead to his conviction on a capital charge. Though they failed to do this in the case of Lord Mordaunt, they succeeded in the case of one Waferer.

All the Catholic biographers agree in accusing

<sup>1</sup> The original document is in the British Museum, Cleopatra E, iv. fol. 130, and has been printed *literatim*, in Cuddon's *Modern British Martyrology* (1838), i. pp. 103, 104.

the persecutors of having been guilty of the detestable meanness of having suborned some rascal to simulate a penitent at confession, in order to find matter of accusation against the Father confessor. According to Garzias the traitor rose from his knees when he had heard Forest's opinion on the King's supremacy, saying, "Thank you, I do not want to hear any more." It seems probable that this wretch was the man called Waferer, who will be mentioned below. According to Bouchier, the King's displeasure had been excited by a book which Forest had written and was about to print.<sup>1</sup>

Forest's arrest, which we may provisionally place at the end of March, 1538, was therefore due to the good advice he gave in the confessional, "because in secret confession he had declared to many of the King's subjects that the King was not Supreme Head of the Church." It was a noble cause, but one which involved him to a combat of exceptional severity. There is no complete record of that combat; but we obtain from the papers which follow some idea of its course. The papers are almost all undated, but seem to arrange themselves in the following order.

First we have a letter to Cromwell from Thomas Chapman, the Warden of the Friars Minor of London, a letter unworthy of a religious, which

<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Chronicle*, p. 78; Fra Marcos, p. 245; Bouchier, pp. 36 to 39. The latter states that Forest's book was entitled *De Autoritate Ecclesie et Pontificis Romani*, and began with the words, *Nemo sibi sumat honorem nisi fuerit vocatus a Deo tanquam Aaron*. He also describes its argument.

ends by assuring Henry's minister, that a certain number of the friars will change their habits as soon as ordered, and adds, "I dare depose for them that were not Observants." As to our martyr he says callously that he had not been able to give a full account of Friar Forest's friends and benefactors before, as he had not had full time for reflection, and he then proceeds to name those who had of late given alms for Forest's support, mentioning Lord Mordaunt amongst others.<sup>1</sup>

Next we find one of Cromwell's curt, unimpassioned *Remembrances* :

"Memorandum, to know the King's pleasure touching Lord Mordaunt, and such other as Friar Forest named for his principal friends."

This probably led to the examination of Lord Mordaunt above quoted. In the meantime Forest had been subjected to the worst of all tortures, protracted examination by pitiless Crown officials, to whom nothing was sacred. The least indiscretion might have betrayed others into the hands of the Tudor tyrant, but so far as we can judge from the surviving "excerpts" from his examinations, he succeeded in saving others, though his bold confession of the Faith, the boldest perhaps that we have from any martyr of this period, cost him his own life.

Before printing all that remains of these examinations, it may be noted that according to the custom of the time, they are called his "Confessions." As they were taken down by the clerk,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiii. n. 88o.

they were the substance of the answers to questions put by the Lords of the Privy Council. This is particularly plain in the second paragraph, which shows us that he had suddenly proposed to him the false commonplace, that the Decree of Nicæa—which required all Eastern Bishops to be subject to the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, as the Bishops of the Western Patriarchate were subject to Rome—signified that the Eastern Patriarchates were independent of the Pope. Taken unawares, and not knowing the true answer, he presumably argued with himself, that if the Council that so said was Ecumenical, it would have been infallible and incapable therefore of defining what was false. His conclusion, therefore, was that it was not a General Council, or as he calls it, “not full.”

He was examined as to what he held of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and his answer is very interesting, and especially interesting is the comparison he makes of “the many other holy Fathers who have suffered now of late,” and in particular of Blessed John Fisher, with St. Thomas. “The many other holy Fathers who have suffered now of late,” would have been the eighteen Carthusians, Bishop Fisher, and Sir Thomas More.

The reference to St. Thomas points to the new phase of the war against the Church, on which the new religionists were entering. The campaign against images, pilgrimages, and shrines was just commencing. By April the 12th it was known even in Germany that St. Thomas’ relics were to be

attacked.<sup>1</sup> Forest's martyrdom was not merely synchronous with this outbreak of iconoclasm. We shall see that his pains were increased and aggravated by its barbarity.

We now come to the "excerpts" from Forest's confessions, and we shall see as we read them, what the sequel will also show, that is, that they are selected in order to prove him guilty of heresy in the Ecclesiastical Court.

*"Excerpt out of the Confessions of Friar Forest.*

"First, that the same Friar Forest understands by this clause of the Creed, *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam*, thus: that we must believe in the Church of Rome and the institutions of the same. And that we believing so are true Christian men.

[2] "Item, that there was a certain Council gathered at Nicea by an heretic Bishop who applied unto him certain other Bishops, whereat was neither the Pope nor the Emperor, where was made a certain ordinance whereby the Church of Rome should have no power over them, and the same was taken for no Council because it was not full.

[3] "Item, that he said thus, 'That blessed man, St. Thomas of Canterbury, suffered for the rights of the Church. For there was a great man (meaning King Harry II.) which because St. Thomas of Canterbury would not grant him such things as he asked of him contrary to the liberties of the Church, first banished him out of this realm, and at his return he was slain in his own church for the right of Holy

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, viii. (i.) n. 754.



Church, as many other holy Fathers have suffered now of late, as that holy Father the Bishop of Rochester. And I doubt not but their souls be now in Heaven.'

[4] "Item, that he said to one Wafferer in confession that he had denied the Bishop of Rome by an oath given by his outward man but not in the inward man.

[5] "Item, he confesseth that when one Yardeley said unto him that he would believe in no pardon [*i.e.*, indulgence], he said this unto him, 'Then I perceive ye are a Lutheran;' and with that rose from him and would give him no absolution.

[6] "Item, he saith and believeth that he ought to have a double obedience, first to the King's Highness by the laws of God and the second to the Bishop of Rome by his Rule and profession.

[7] "Item, he confesseth that he used and practised to induce men in confession to hold and stick to the old fashion of belief that was used in this realm of long time past.

[8] "Item, he saith and believeth that it is not lawful for him to change his habit at the King's commandment, forasmuch as it is against the Rule that he hath professed.

[9] "Item, he saith and believeth that it is lawful for him to change his habit at the Bishop of Rome's commandment, for he did first institute the same.

[10] "Item, he saith that he believeth that by the laws of God no subjects may make any profession,

Rules, laws or ordinance, whereby they may withdraw any part of their obedience to their princes.”<sup>1</sup>

Our next document is a dated letter from Cranmer to Cromwell written on “the 6th day of April.” It cannot have preceded the “confessions,” but it may have come before the “excerpts” from those confessions, which, as we have seen, already betray the resolution to try the friar for heresy. This letter shows by whose orders it was that he was to be so tried.

“My very singular good Lord,—In my most hearty wise I commend me unto your Lordship; signifying unto the same that according to the effect and purport of your letters to me directed concerning Friar Forest, the Bishop of Worcester and I will be to-morrow with your Lordship, to know farther of your pleasure in that behalf. For if we should proceed against him according to the order of the law, there must be Articles devised beforehand, which must be ministered unto him; and therefore it will be very well done that one draw them against our meeting. Thus, my Lord, right heartily fare you well. At Lambeth, the 6th day of April [1538]. Yours own assured ever,

“T. CANTUARIEN.”<sup>2</sup>

Cranmer had written, “There must be articles devised,” and someone (perhaps he himself) accord-

<sup>1</sup> The original is in the Record Office, *Letters and Papers*, viii. (i.) n. 1043.

<sup>2</sup> *Works of Cranmer*, Parker Society, 1846, p. 365.

ingly drew up a list, eventually reduced to four, which is still extant. The compiler seems to have worked upon the "excerpts," basing the first article on the first "excerpt," the second article on the fifth "excerpt," and the third article on the seventh "excerpt." For the fourth article, on the contrary, we find no foundation in the "excerpts," a point of importance to which we shall return. It is also noteworthy that no advantage is taken of the faulty reasoning about the Council of Nicæa, which underlay the second "excerpt." The presumption is that Forest, upon reflection, or better information, altered his mind, or explained his meaning, so that no hold could be taken of him in this matter. The articles then were eventually drawn up as follows:

"*First*, that the Holy Catholic Church was the Church of Rome, and that we ought to believe out of the same.

"*Secondly*, that we should believe on the Pope's pardon for remission of our sins.

"*Thirdly*, that we ought to believe and do as our fathers have done aforetime fourteen years past.

"*Fourthly*, that a priest may turn and change the pains of hell of a sinner, truly penitent, contrite of his sins, by certain penance enjoined him in[to] the pains of purgatory.—Which said articles be most abominable heresies, blasphemy against God, and contrary to Scripture and the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, and to abhor any true Christian heart to think."<sup>1</sup>

It was on April the 6th, as we have seen, that

<sup>1</sup> Wriothesley's *Chronicle*, p. 79.

Cranmer spoke of having these articles drawn up, and a month elapsed before Forest was tried upon them. This may therefore be an opportune moment for discussing the last article at greater length.

First, we note that the fourth article represents the well-known doctrine of the Catholic Church, that after the forgiveness of the guilt of mortal sin by sacramental absolution, with the right dispositions, the eternal punishment is remitted, though a temporal punishment may remain due. But here the doctrine is made to sound as though souls could be brought out of Hell through a penance enjoined by the priest. This is, of course, a Lutheran misrepresentation. *Positis ponendis*, the effect of the Sacrament [forgiveness of sins], is produced by *absolution*, not by the *penance* enjoined, and the description which is given of that effect ["changing the pains of hell"] is most insufficient and unsatisfactory.

Thus, whilst the first three articles were articles to live for and die for, the fourth should have been carefully avoided, for it was full of dangers. To have rejected it too emphatically might have given scandal, for such rejection might have seemed like a denial of the underlying Catholic doctrine. To have accepted the article *in that form* was also illicit, so long as the least importance was attached to the form. So true, indeed, was the last alternative that if all the four articles had to be accepted or rejected together, they should, at least, not have been accepted. An answer of *Non possumus* should have been returned. Indeed, the case could be conceived

in which they might all be rejected. Such a case would occur if it were understood that the rejection turned precisely on the form of the fourth article.

Forest's duty, therefore, with these articles before him, was not perfectly simple and clear, and in effect we shall not find ourselves able to give a very clear account of the line he actually took in their regard.

Next let us advert to the external circumstances under which this article was proposed. On April the 6th, the very day that Cranmer was casting about for articles of accusation against Forest, a report was sent from Wales which was much to his purpose. Ellis Price, Cromwell's commissary for the diocese of St. Asaph, who had been busily occupied in the iconoclastic campaign, of which we have spoken above, sent information that at Llanderfel (*i.e.*, the Church of St. Derfel, called in Welsh Darvel Gadarn, that is, Derfel the Strong) there was an image of the patron saint as to which Cromwell might like to take special measures. Price added "that there is a common saying amongst the innocent people that whosoever will offer anything to the image of Darvel Gadarn, he *hath power to fetch him that so offers out of Hell when they be damned.*"<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell's policy at that time was to undermine, so far as he could, the traditional faith of Englishmen by publicly insulting, and abusing what had previously been held in veneration. As he had lately destroyed the Rood of Boxley and other holy images before an heretical mob, so he now had the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xxi. n. 694.

statue of St. Derfel sent up to London, and decided that it should be publicly burnt along with Forest, as in fact it was.

Moreover, in order that the injury to Catholicism might be as great as possible, the Catholic beliefs which underlay the *cultus* of the Saints were publicly parodied, and the calumny was represented in popular form by the following lines that were set up in great letters on the martyr's gallows.

David Darvell Gatheren,  
As saith the Welshmen,  
    Fetched outlaws out of hell :  
Now is he come with spere and shilde,  
In harness to burn in Smithfielde,  
    For in Wales he may not dwell.

And Forest the Friar,  
That obstinate liar,  
    That wilfullie shal be dead,  
In his contumacie  
The gospell doth denie,  
    The King to be supreme head.

It would evidently have been very convenient for Cromwell and his associates, that Forest should have actually professed that misrepresentation of Catholic belief, which they here ascribed to the *cultores* of St. Derfel. If he would not actually do that, it would at least be something if he should own to having said that "the pains of Hell of a sinner" might be "turned or changed" by prayers enjoined by a priest. If he and the image of St. Derfel were to be burnt together, the public would expect to have it shown that there was some

parallel in their cases. Whilst therefore there is no precedent in the "excerpts" for the fourth article, the Government had evident good reason to impose that article upon him. This is all we can yet say as to its origin, but it is probably sufficient.

It will be worth our while to pursue our study of the doggerel stanzas just quoted a little further. They are taken from a scurrilous ballad, called *The Fantasies of Idolatrie*,<sup>1</sup> varying in this only, that in the ballad the past tense is used, as "The Gospel did deny," and the first word "Also" in the ballad, is changed into "David," or Taffy, as the statue came from Wales. The next verse in the ballad runs thus :

At Saynt Marget Patens,  
The roode is gone then,  
And stoele away by nyght;  
With his tabernacle and crosse,  
With all that there was,  
And is gone away quygt.

We learn from Wriothesley that on the same 22nd day of May (the day on which Friar Forest was burned), the image of the Rood at St. Margaret Pattens by Tower Street was broken all in pieces, with the house it stood in, by certain lewd persons, Flemings and Englishmen, and some persons of the said parish. Five days afterwards there was a great fire in St. Margaret Pattens parish among the basket-makers, "where were burnt and perished in three hours above a dozen houses and nine persons, of

<sup>1</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, vol. v. p. 404.

men, women, and children, clear burnt to death, which was a piteous sight."

The verses that precede those on Friar Forest in the ballad, too offensive for quotation, relate to the Rood of Grace from Boxley, the Holy Blood from Hales, and the Rood from St. Saviour's in Southwark. The first two were destroyed at St. Paul's Cross on the 24th of February, and the other was taken down on the 2nd of March in the same year, 1538. Our Lady of Walsingham is mentioned in the ballad. That venerated image was brought to London in July and burnt at Chelsea by Cromwell. The ballad, however, only speaks of the wealth of the sanctuary, and it must have been written before the statue was brought to London to be destroyed. The ballad, which in Foxe is attributed to a man named Gray, must therefore have been written in part before Friar Forest's execution, but after that it was made known at least to some that Darvel Gadarn would be burnt in the fire by which Forest was to die, and in part shortly after that event. The statue of St. Derfel, we may add, is described by Wriothlesley as "like a man of arms in his harness, having a little spear in his hand, and a casket of iron about his neck, hanging with a ribbon."<sup>1</sup>

This little digression has been necessary partly to

<sup>1</sup> In the porch of the Church of Llanderfel may still be seen the remains of the Saint's horse, which was not taken up to London with its rider. It is a quaint-looking animal, more like a camel than a horse, carved very rudely, and it has lost its legs. But as an historical relic it has the greatest interest.—Ed.



suggest the probable origin of the article objected against Forest, partly to show the peculiar phase of the persecution during which he suffered, a phase which soon passed away after the law of the Six Articles enacted next year. For the moment, however, iconoclasm, with all its accompanying horrors, was in the ascendant, and we must now see how Friar Forest fared while the persecutors were under its baleful influence.

A month after Cranmer began to arrange articles for Forest, the future martyr was called before the Archbishop's court and tried for heresy. We are given to understand that his previous imprisonment had been severe, so that he would have come into court very unfit for the struggle that was before him.

We have already seen the insidious character of the articles proposed to Forest, and unfortunately at this point, where we should wish to know with great minuteness and accuracy what Forest did in their regard, our only witnesses to his words and deeds are two heterodox laymen. If what Charles Wriothesley and Edward Hall say is true, then our martyr wavered at first. But according to all witnesses (and Wriothesley is here more emphatic than any other), Forest's constancy was heroic in every succeeding phase of the conflict.

Of the first trial this is Wriothesley's account :

"John Forest, Friar Observant, Doctor of Divinity, [was] abjured for heresie on the eighth day of the month of May, at Lambeth, before the most reverend father in God, Thomas Cranmer,

Archbishop of Canterburie, with other." . . . "The articles [were] subscribed with his own hand, [and he] sworn and abjured on the same, and after sworn again to abide such injunction and penance as he should be enjoined by the said court."<sup>1</sup>

If this is accurately reported, it cannot be defended. If Forest was right in abjuring the articles because of the objectionable form in which the last was couched, then he should by no means have signed and sworn to them. *Vice versa*, if he thought the misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine contained in the fourth article only slight, accidental, or not likely to lead to misunderstandings, then he might sign all four propositions, but cannot be defended for having abjured them.

Nor can it be believed that the story told by Wriothesley and Hall is a mere fabrication. All the other chroniclers support it, though they are less original and explicit. Moreover Latimer, in a contemporary letter to be quoted directly, speaks of Forest's retractation in terms which may be unfair, but cannot possibly be considered untrue. Thus we can hardly escape the conclusion that, whatever Forest may have done or said on May the 8th, he did not "confess the faith" with credit to himself, but was either puzzled by the difficulty of the problem before him, or cajoled, or frightened, or forced into some compromise which his enemies boastfully called an abjuration of his error. He

<sup>1</sup> Wriothesley's *Chronicle*, pp. 78, 79. Hall's *Chronicle*, p. 825, says: "He was, after sundry examinations, convinced and confuted, and gladly submitted himself to abide the punishment of the Church."

may have had many partial excuses, his error may not have amounted to more than a misunderstanding.<sup>1</sup>

As to what followed Forest's "submission," Hall has something to tell, though he cannot do so without showing his animus and playing on the alleged confession that Forest had "taken the oath with the outward man, though with the inward man he had never consented thereunto." Hall writes: "But upon his submission, having more liberty than before he had, as well to talk with whom he would, as also who that would to talk with him, certain such outward man as he was so talked with him and so incensed him that the outward friar was so far from his open confession as ever he was, and when his abjuration was sent him to read and look upon, he utterly refused it."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Upon the whole, the simplest conjectural solution of the difficulty seems to be this. An attempt was made to tie Forest down to some phrases about "changing the pains of Hell," this subject having been suggested by Ellis Price's letter. Perhaps Forest really let slip the words in the dispute to which he came unfit and unprepared. It would then have been exactly Cranmer's manner to suggest that, if Forest would subscribe the first three articles and abjure the last only, the exact tenor of his renunciation should be kept secret, and he allowed to go free. (See above, p. 206.) Suppose that Forest fell into this trap, the result might have been exactly what the chroniclers in fact record.

It will soon appear that though the articles were signed in writing, the "abjuration" or "submission" was by word of mouth only, and was rejected by Forest as soon as it was presented in a written form. This again makes his mistake more intelligible, though it does not entirely excuse him.

<sup>2</sup> E. Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 825. So far as this evidence goes, Forest did not even read the formula of his abjuration on May the 8th, and a confirmation of this may be deduced from Wriothesley, who says that on May the 22nd Latimer showed Forest's articles

When Forest is said to have had, after May the 8th, "more liberty than before," this only means, as we shall see, liberty to converse *with other prisoners*. The inference, therefore, is that up to the 8th he had been severely tried in some solitary dungeon or condemned cell, and was afterwards allowed to confer with some Catholic confessors who were still in durance, and that it was they who strengthened the martyr for his last combat. But Latimer, whose letter is still to come, mentions these things as conjectures only, so we must not finally assume that they were certain facts.

Wriothesley's description of the next scene is as follows: "The 12th day of May being the third Sunday after Easter, the Bishop of Worcester called Dr. Latymer, preached at Paul's Cross, at whose sermon should have been present a penitent to have done his penance called John Forest . . . and should have borne a fagot, and with a loud voice have declared certain things with his own mouth." But for the reasons already recited, Forest was not there. Dr. Quent, Dean of the Arches, had done his best to persuade him by threatening him with "death by burning as all hereticks should have by the laws of this realm," but in vain. The martyr stood firm, and Latimer could only read over the articles which Forest had signed, and beg his hearers to pray that "the friar might be converted from his said obstinacy and proud mind."<sup>1</sup>

"signed with his own hand," whilst the abjuration was not shown under similar formalities. If it could have been produced, it certainly would have been.

<sup>1</sup> Wriothesley's *Chronicle*, i. pp. 78, 79.

After this, Forest must have been pronounced a relapsed heretic in the Archbishop's court at Lambeth, and sentenced to death, but of this no record is forthcoming. On the 18th, Latimer wrote to Cromwell a letter to which more than one reference has already been made. It must be remembered that it is the answer of one calling himself a Christian Bishop, in reply to an invitation to preach on the occasion of the public burning of a man for his religion.

"*Salutem in Christo plurimam.* And, sir, if it be your pleasure, as it is, that I shall play the fool after my customable manner when Forest shall suffer, I would wish that my stage stood near unto Forest; for I would endeavour myself so to content the people that therewith I might also convert Forest, God so helping, or rather altogether working; wherefore I would that he should hear what I shall say, *si forte*, &c. Forest I hear is not duly accompanied in Newgate for his amendment, with the White Friars of Doncaster and monks of the Charterhouse, in a fit chamber more likely to indurate than to mollify; whether through the fault of the sheriff or the gaoler, or both, no man could sooner discern than your Lordship. Some think he is rather comforted in his way than discouraged; some think he is allowed both to hear Mass and also to receive the Sacrament; which if it be so, it is enough to confirm him in his obstinacy, as though he were to suffer for a just cause. These things would be tried *ut relegantur ex multis cordibus cogita-*

tiones. It is to be feared that some instilled into him that, though he should have persevered in his abjuration, yet he should have suffered afterward for treason, and so by that occasion he might have been induced to refuse his abjuration. If he would yet with heart return to his abjuration, I would wish his pardon; such is my foolishness. . . .

“H. L. WIGORN.

“18th May.”<sup>1</sup>

Latimer here speaks in the plural of the White Friars of Doncaster and monks of the Charterhouse, but we only know of one of each, that is to say Laurence Cook, Prior of the Carmelites of Doncaster, and the Blessed William Horne, lay-brother of the London Charterhouse. These two were martyred together at Tyburn on the 4th of August, 1540. That the company of these holy confessors of the Faith and future martyrs helped to strengthen Blessed John Forest, cannot be doubted. We are led to hope from Latimer's expressions that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated in Newgate, and that in their prison the Divine Viaticum comforted the servants of God and fortified them for their painful journey. Hugh Latimer begrudged it to them, and naturally, as he recognized that “to hear Mass and to receive the Sacrament was enough to confirm them in their obstinacy.” He also thought it bad for their souls to be in “a fit chamber,” and he did his best by his suggestions to the all-powerful Cromwell, to get every comfort

<sup>1</sup> *Remains of Latimer*, Parker Society, 1845, p. 391.

taken from them. His interference may have made life harder for the two who had more than two years of Newgate before them, but to Blessed John Forest the difference could not have been great, as in four days' time his soul was set free as the bird from the hands of the fowler.

On Wednesday, the 22nd of May, 1538, the end came. The martyrdom was to be at Smithfield, not far from the Grey Friars Church, in which Forest's alleged treasons and heresies were said to have been perpetrated, and Wriothesley thus describes the preparations which were made there. "The place of execution where the gallows and fire were made was railed about; and there was a scaffold made to set the pulpit on where the preacher stood, and another against it where the friar stood all the sermon time, and a long scaffold next to St. Bartholomew's Spital gate, where the Lords of the Privy Council sat with the Mayor and Aldermen and other gentlemen and commons of the city." As for the people present, he says that there were there the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Earls of Sussex and Hertford, John Stokesley, Bishop of London, with others of the King's Council, Sir Richard Gresham, Lord Mayor of London, with the most part of the aldermen and sheriffs, and, as he estimated, ten thousand persons or more. Truly that which was a spectacle to the angels was a spectacle also to men.

As there were an unusual number of spectators at this last scene, so there are also many accounts of it. The witnesses, indeed, viewed the scene from

different points of view, and saw its details in very different lights, yet there is little or no difficulty now in seeing how their different narratives piece one into the other.

Garzias, after describing the platforms, pulpit and stand much as Wriothesley has done, goes on to tell us that a proclamation, which he probably heard himself, was cried all over London for people to go and hear Latimer's sermon, which was to begin at eight in the morning and last till eleven. He must mean by this that by eleven o'clock all was over, and the multitude on their way back to their homes.

When all were in their places, "good old Dr. Forest," as Garzias called him, was brought in. Fra Marcos adds that he had been drawn on a hurdle from prison (*i.e.*, from Newgate), that he wore a tattered habit of his Order, and that his hands and feet were bound. To Garzias he appeared to be about sixty-five, Fra Marcos calls him seventy, which would correspond with the chronology we have adopted above.

Latimer ascended the pulpit and preached for a long time, quite an hour, says Garzias. "A noble sermon," is Wriothesley's account of it, "to have drawn the said Friar Forest from his opinions; but he obstinately stood still and stiff in his opinions." Grafton's words are, "But such was his frowardness that he neither would hear nor speak." This is not to be understood as meaning that Forest refused to utter a word, but that he prudently said nothing when he perceived that he could not obtain a



hearing. Fra Marcos says that he tried to speak, but the heretics made so much noise that he could not be heard.

The effect of Forest's eloquent silence was not lost. Latimer was finally constrained to request him to speak. "Being asked," says Wriothesley, "by the Bishop in what state he would die, he openly declared with a loud voice to the Bishop as followeth :

"'That if an angel should come down from Heaven and show him any other thing than he had believed all his lifetime past he would not believe him, and that if his body should be cut joint after joint or member after member, brent hanged, or what pain soever might be done to his body, he would never turn from his old sect of this Bishop of Rome.'"

In all the Acts of our Martyrs there is no braver confession of the faith than this, and its value is enhanced by having been preserved to us by an enemy.

And now that the martyr had set forth the cause for which he suffered beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, he turned to Latimer, and confuted the whole of his long sermon in a single sentence, saying, "Seven years ago he durst not have made such a sermon for his life."<sup>1</sup>

Bourchier and Fra Marcos, who however condense a great deal, tell us that when Latimer saw himself worsted, he cried out, *Comburatur ! Comburatur !*—"Burn him ! Burn him !" Garzias is

<sup>1</sup> Wriothesley, p. 80.

much more wordy, and attributes this cry to Cromwell. He says,

“ When the Bishop had been preaching quite an hour he said these words: ‘ Dr. Forest, I am astonished that thou, whom I hold for one of the most learned men in the realm, should be accused of being a Papist, and I refuse to believe it until I hear it from thine own mouth.’ To which the good Doctor replied: ‘ Thou hast known me for many years, Latimer, and I am still more astonished at thee, that for the pomps of the world thou hast endangered thine own soul. Dost thou not recollect what thou didst write me against the Emperor when he was against Rome and the Pope, and how thou with all thy voice didst denounce them all as heretics? Recollect how we, the Doctors of the Church, considered the act and condemned it, and decided that those who did it should be excommunicated. What wert thou then, Latimer, a Papist or a heretic?’ To which Latimer replied, ‘ I am no heretic, but rather was I then deceived, and am now enlightened with the Holy Spirit, and if thou wilt call upon thy better self, thou also wilt receive the light, for thou art now blind.’ ‘ Oh Latimer,’ said the good Doctor, ‘ I think thou hast other things in thy heart, but since the King hath made thee from a poor student into a Bishop, thou art constrained to say this. Open thou thine eyes; take example from that holy Bishop of Rochester and the Blessed Thomas More, who renounced the goods of this world, and chose rather to die than to lose their

immortal souls.' Latimer retorted, 'Oh God, how great are the snares of the Bishop of Rome, who has kept men in darkness for so many years. And look thou, Dr. Forest, that thou mayest see the snare and the falsity of his saints, they shall bring hither one of the idols of the Bishop of Rome.'"

Needless to say that the "idol" introduced so theatrically by Latimer is the statue of the warrior saint from Llanderfel in Wales. The name appeared in the verses on the gallows as Derfel Gatheren, and the London crowd made out that this meant Derfel the Collector, because, they said, "those who stole anything were absolved by the priests if they brought to the statue a part of their booty." It was, we are told by our Spanish informant, "a great wooden saint which eight men could scarcely carry, so big indeed that it looked like a giant. They hoisted it on to the platform where Dr. Forest was, and three men had as much as they could do to keep it upright."

"Then said Latimer, 'Look, Dr. Forest, this is one of the idols of the Bishop of Rome; and for my part I think the priests ought to have given the Bishop of Rome half of his profits.' When the good Doctor heard this he laughed and said, 'I am not surprised that what thou sayest should have happened, for the priests are so greedy that they well might invent that and much more, but do not think that the Pope sanctions any such thing.'

"In these arguments much time was passed till

at last Cromwell said, 'My Lord Bishop, I think you strive in vain with this stubborn man. It would be better to burn him.' Then said Dr. Forest, 'Gentlemen, if I were willing to sacrifice my soul it would not have been necessary to have come to this pass.' 'Take him off at once,' said Cromwell; and as the three men on the platform were still supporting the wooden saint, Dr. Forest turned to them and said, 'Brethren, I pray ye do not drop it on me, for my hour is not yet come.' Then Bishop Latimer addressed Forest again and said, 'Brother Forest, I beseech thee to turn. The King will give thee a good living, for I know full well that if thou wishest thou art well able to give doctrine to great numbers.' But Forest replied, 'All the treasures of the world, Latimer, will not make me move from my will, but I much desire to speak with one of the gentlemen here.'

"Then the good Duke of Norfolk rose to go and speak with him, but Cromwell called out, 'My Lord Duke, take your seat again; if he wants anything, let him say it out so that we can all hear.' So the Duke went back to his seat again. A mystery of God indeed is this that a common man should hold so much authority that one of the noblest dukes in the land should obey him.

"When Dr. Forest saw that they would not let him speak to any one, he made the sign of the cross and said, 'Gentlemen, with this body of mine deal as you wish.' So they brought him down, and took him to the gibbet, which was just near, and they tied him with a chain round his waist, and hung

him up suspended by the middle. He begged them to let his hands be free, which they did."

So far Garzias. Fra Marcos says that two halberdiers took him off the stand to the gibbet on their shoulders, which reminded his informant of the lamb, the emblem of Christ. Then there was a difficulty found in hoisting him high enough to have the chains fastened, and that the halberts were used to push him up into the swinging position.<sup>1</sup> Bouchier adds that his habit had been pulled off, and that he said, *Nec ignis, nec fasciculus nec patibulum separabit me a te, Domine*—"Neither fire, nor faggot, nor scaffold shall separate me from Thee, O Lord."

"Then," continues Garzias, "they began to set fire underneath him, and as it reached his feet he drew them up a little, but directly afterwards let them down again, and he began to burn. The holy man beat his breast with his right hand, and then raised both his hands to heaven and said many prayers in Latin,<sup>2</sup> his last spoken words being, *Domine, miserere mei*: and when the fire reached his breast he spoke no more and gave up his soul to God.

"As soon as the fire was lighted they cast the wooden saint into it and it was burnt. A miracle happened, for the fire had hardly destroyed the body when at mid-day was seen a dove, as white as snow, over the head of the sainted dead, and remained there a long time seen by many people.

<sup>1</sup> One would like to think that the martyr was hung by the middle, in order that he might be the sooner suffocated, but it is to be feared that the motive was to make him look ridiculous.

<sup>2</sup> Bouchier says he constantly ejaculated, *In umbra alarum tuarum sperabo, donec transeat iniquitas*.

After dinner the body was taken down and buried in a hospital, and so ended the good Doctor."<sup>1</sup>

J. M.

J. H. P.

[A word of explanation must be added as to the parts which Father Morris and I have taken in compiling the above Life. He died, as is well known, quite suddenly, and I found that he had left the biography quite complete indeed, but also quite uncorrected—evidently only a first draft without any notes or authorities. When I began to supply these, I found that he had accepted as the basis of his chronology, the statement that Forest was four years in prison before suffering. Moreover, he had dated all otherwise undated documents so as to agree with this. Such an arrangement was evidently untenable, and I felt sure he would have discarded it if he had lived to go over the work again. I therefore rewrote almost everything that concerned the martyr's arrests and examinations. Thus the beginning and the end are mostly his, the central portions chiefly mine.—J. H. P.]

<sup>1</sup> The narratives can be reconciled in their accounts of what he did with his hands, though not easily. Fra Marcos says his hands were bound, Garzias that they were loosed at his own request, Hall dwells upon his clutching at the ladder. The struggle to loosen his hands may at a distance have had the appearance of the violence of which Fra Marcos, and he alone, speaks, viz., that the martyr was held up by the halberts.

The two Franciscan writers describe the death as having been long and painful. A strong wind, they say, blew aside the flames, and the fire died down. Then some persons in charity threw down the gallows with the sufferer into the fire, and so ended his agony. These writers do not specifically mention the burning of the image of St. Derfel.

## AUTHORITIES.

1. *Contemporary Correspondence*.—The *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic*, Henry VIII., contain all the strictly contemporary papers at present known. They have been referred to in the notes, but the original collection is, of course, far richer in illustrative matter than the references indicate. Their great defect is that they are all from hostile pens. No letters from Catholic ambassadors or Papal informants relative to Forest have as yet been put before the public, yet some papers of this sort must (one would think) have existed.

2. *Early Biographers*.—(a) The first of these has been called Garzias in the above Life, as Father Persons quoted him by that name about the year 1600. (*The Month*, May, 1889.) Garzias' work has of late years been happily rediscovered in Spain by Major Martin A. S. Hume, and edited by him in English under the title, *A Chronicle of King Henry VIII., in Spanish*, 1889.

Garzias was, in all probability, an eye-witness of the martyrdom, and it is clear that he was a man of wide information. Though a Catholic, he was also a courtier. Even in the account above quoted, we see him almost as much put out by the want of deference shown by Cromwell to a Duke as by the death of Forest. He much admired King Henry for his vigour and munificence. He is therefore not likely to have exaggerated his account of the sufferings of the martyr out of hatred against the persecutors as other Catholics might have done. Major Hume thinks that the work, as we now have it, was begun in England, and completed in Flanders between the years 1550 and 1552.

(b) Marcos da Silva, generally known by his name in Religion, Fra Marcos da Lisboa, afterwards Bishop of Oporto, wrote a chronicle of the Friars Minor. The first volumes appeared in Portuguese, but the third volume was published in Spanish, at Salamanca, in 1569, and is entitled, *Tercera parte de las Chronicas de la orden de los frayles Menores del Seraphico padre Sant Francisco*. The account of Forest is found in

part iii. lib. ix. cap. 25, pp. 244, 245. He refers to his authorities in general terms as, *Relaciones fede degnas*. Judging from similar references in other parts of the same book, one would suppose that he was using manuscripts. These do not seem to be now known. Perhaps they may yet be found in the libraries of Spain, as Garzias was.

Another unknown ms. source may also be indicated here. It is mentioned in Sbaralea, *Supplementum ad Scriptores Ord. S. Francisci*, n. 2195. The author is Angelo Galloto, a Sicilian Observant, who wrote, apparently in the middle of the sixteenth century, a tract called *Martyrium Joannis Foresti*, which is mentioned also by Wadding, n. 1135. The work, which seems not to have been printed, appears to have survived till Sbaralea's time at least, that is, till a century ago. It may therefore still be in existence.

(c) Thomas Bouchier, an English Observant, who is said in the introduction to the edition of his book, printed at Ingolstadt, in 1583, to have entered the Order in 1566, but by others to have been a friar at Greenwich during Mary's reign, wrote in Paris a book entitled *Historia Ecclesiastica de Martyrio Fratrum Ord. D. Francisci, dictorum de Observantia, qui in Anglia . . . in Belgio, et in Hybernia . . . passi sunt*. The *censura* bears date the 15th of September, 1581. He gained his information, he tells us, by writing many letters to those who had sure knowledge. Unfortunately, he overlooked the chronicles that were to his hand, and his chronology is quite indefensible. (pp. 5, 6, &c.) Like many other historians of his time, he composed speeches for those who appear in his history; for instance, at p. 39, an epitome of a talk held in the confessional. For this reason it would be unwise to rely on the verbal accuracy of his report of Forest's correspondence with Catherine, the chronology of which is quite untenable in Bouchier's narrative. He makes the Queen survive the Friar, though she died two years sooner. It is always extremely rare for letter and answer to be preserved together, and in this case the chances against its having been done three times over were truly enormous.

Bouchier was used by an Italian friar, Faustino Tasso, *Historie de' Successi de' Nostri Tempi*, 1560—1580, pp. 181—194, a gossip writer, who cannot possibly be considered a



historian. F. Gonzaga, O.S.F., afterwards Bishop of Mantua, is more scholarly, but had no fresh sources of information. His work is called *De Origine Religionis Franciscanae*, Romæ, 1587, folio.

(d) An important book for the biography of Forest is the "enlarged" edition of Sander, brought out by Father Persons, at Rome, in 1586. (*English Historical Review*, January, 1891.) Persons' object was to make the book a more or less complete handbook of English Catholic history, and so he inserted the history of Forest, which Sander had omitted, having contented himself with the bare record of the martyrdom. But Persons saw, what everyone who looks into the matter must see, that Bouchier's chronology was most faulty. So, keeping Stow's *Chronicle* (as it seems) before his eyes, he made an attempt to correct this fault.

The first edition of Stow is that of 1582, and in it we read (p. 979) under the year 1532: "The 28 of May, Fryer Forrest was put in prison for contraryng the Preacher before the King." In later editions this is corrected and the whole story of Peto and Elstow is given in its stead. Persons, however, at p. 115, copies the statement which was in Stow before him, altering however the year to 1533, and [erroneously] inserting Latimer's name as that of the preacher. He saw that, if Forest and Queen Catherine did really correspond, they must have done so before 1536. He therefore says that Forest was mistaken in thinking that he would die in three days. From these emendations it was deduced that Forest was in prison for over four years.

The first edition of Sander, that of Rishton, at Cologne, 1585, gave the right date for the martyrdom, "undecimo Calendas Junias" (May the 22nd), which was (so far as I have noticed) not mentioned by the published chronicles or early biographers. Persons made a slip in copying, and printed, "unde ad decimas Calendas Junias." But this would have been on May the 23rd. (Roman edition, p. 183.) The original Sander also mentioned the two chains, as Fra Marcos does, but says they were put round his arms, whereas one was tied round his waist. (Wriothesley, Stow, and Bouchier.)

If we regard this as a first attempt to introduce order into the history, we should praise it as a step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, it was regarded by the uncritical writers who followed Persons as the last word on the subject. Thus, Barezzo Barezzi (a bookseller of Cremona), the translator of Fra Marcos into Italian (said to have been published at Venice, in 1608; but I only know the French translation, Paris, 1609, where Forest's story will be found, vol. iv. pp. 216—229), actually discarded his author's own version of the story, although one of the most ancient and valuable that we have, in order to adopt what he thought was the most recent utterance of scientific history on the subject. Even the great Wadding did much the same thing, *Annales Minorum*, tom. xvi. (1736), and the mistake has been repeated down to our own times. It has been shown above that Forest was not in prison as long as Father Persons imagined. Persons' erroneous date of the martyrdom has also been widely accepted.

3. *Chroniclers*.—(a) Of these, the earliest is that of Charles Wriothesley (Edit. W. D. Hamilton, 1875, 2 vols., Camden Society). Like all the chroniclers who wrote under the Tudors, he is extremely hostile to Forest (pp. 78—81), but he quotes official dates and papers not to be found elsewhere.

(b) Edward Hall. The part relative to Forest was published in 1550 by Richard Grafton, and copied by the latter in his own chronicle. This account is of a different character from the last, and to judge from its style, may have been based upon some political pamphlet of the time. (Pp. 865 and 463 of the editions of 1809.)

(c) Raphael Holinshed follows Hall. Stow uses both Hall and Wriothesley.

(d) The *London Chronicle*, edited by C. Hopper, contains an early notice of the martyrdom (reprinted in Stone, p. 68).

4. *Later Writers*.—L. Wadding's *Annales FF. Minorum* (Ancona, 1731), vol. xvi. pp. 365 et seq. The same author's *Scriptores . . . et Martyres Ord. Min.* (Romæ, 1806), pp. 141—240. The Supplements, by Sbaralea, and John de Soto, add some further details. Anthony à Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses* (ed. Bliss, i. pp. 107—110). *The Modern British Martyrology* (Cuddon, 1838). Abbot F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, 1888 (i. p. 192, &c.). Father Thaddeus, O.S.F., *The*

*Life of Blessed John Forest, O.S.F.* J. M. Stone, *Faithful unto Death*, 1892 (pp. 46—70).

RELICS.—It will be noticed that Garzias says that Forest's remains were afterwards gathered up and "buried in a hospital," doubtless St. Bartholomew's, which stood close by. Father Thaddeus tells me he has read somewhere that the mouth and hand were then found to be unconsumed. As this goes to press, a rumour comes to the effect that the martyr's relics have lately been found in Spain. The friars restored by Queen Mary may very possibly have recovered the relics and then sent them abroad.

## XI.

**THE BLESSED RICHARD WHITING**, Abbot of Glastonbury; **THE BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON**, Abbot of Reading; **THE BLESSED JOHN BECHE**, Abbot of Colchester; and **FOUR COMPANIONS**,

*BENEDICTINES.*

*Glastonbury and Reading, 15 November, 1539;  
Colchester, 1 December, 1539.*

BLESSED RICHARD WHITING and his companions worthily represent among our martyrs the great Benedictine Order to which England owes so much. Amid the widespread ruin wrought by the Revolution of the sixteenth century, none was greater or more deplorable than the utter overthrow and destruction of those ancient monasteries, which the piety of our forefathers had scattered widecast over the face of the land. The England of the early days of Henry VIII., as of the centuries before, was in some sort the special patrimony of St. Benedict, and the change wrought by the dissolution of his abbeys was one so violent and so radical, that it is difficult adequately to realize it now-a-days.

Amid all the houses of God that were then laid low, none was so famous, so ancient, and so

holy as Glastonbury. What memories, what legends the very name calls up! A place of wondrous fascination, with its traditions stretching back to the white-haired Arimathean, bearing the sacred treasure of the Holy Grail in one hand, and the thorn with its wondrous blossom in the other. Memories of the heroic King who held at bay the forces of Saxon heathenness for a generation, and now sleeps peacefully beneath the sacred soil of Avalon. And then the saints of Glastonbury! Apostles like Patrick, sages like Gildas, kings like Lucius and Alfred, martyrs like Elphege and Benignus, monks like Angus and Coelfrid, prelates like David, Paulinus, and Dunstan. All these, and how many more, had lived here lives of prayer and mortification, had died here deaths precious in the sight of God, or at least had enriched the Rome of Britain with their holy dust. Most sacred spot to the Briton, home of his faith and chiefest sanctuary of his religion, it became none the less sacred to the pagan Saxon invader, and it lost none of its mysterious influence over men's souls when the Normans, with their affectation of contempt for Saxon sainthood, became in their turn conquerors of the land.

And its external dignity and magnificence were in keeping with this unique spiritual position. The glorious church, which exceeded in size most of the cathedrals that now exist in England,<sup>1</sup> still incom-

<sup>1</sup> Browne-Willis, *Mitred Abbeys*, i. p. 99, says *all*, but this is a mistake. Glastonbury was exceeded in area by eleven, and in length by eight. But it was larger than Norwich, Worcester, Gloucester

parably beautiful in its ruin and decay, with our Lady's chapel at the western end,<sup>1</sup> a gem of Norman architecture, and the glorious chancel-arch soaring to the sky, a veritable *porta cæli*—what must it have been in the splendour of its virgin integrity, in the full noon-tide of its unravaged beauty?

The monastery girding it round, like the rich setting of a precious gem; the long-drawn cloisters, where the fountain ran ceaselessly in the midst of the garth, and the novices sang their prick-song around their master's desk; the great library, with its store of priceless treasures, so numerous and so perfect, that the very sight of them took Leland's breath away;<sup>2</sup> the quiet scriptorium, where day by

or Exeter, and longer than Peterborough, Salisbury or Durham. Even Lincoln exceeded it by only two feet. Its area was 37,800 sq. feet, and its length 479 feet. (See Sir Edmund Beckett's (now Lord Grimthorpe) *Book on Building*, p. 376.)

<sup>1</sup> Commonly known as the Chapel of St. Joseph of Arimathea.

<sup>2</sup> Browne-Willis (i. p. 108) quotes a passage from Leland's *De Scriptoribus* as to the Glastonbury Library: "Eram aliquot abhinc annis Glessoburgi Somurotrigum, ubi antiquissimum simul et famosissimum est totius insulæ nostræ cœnobium, animumque longo studiorum labore fessum, favente Richardo Whitingo ejusdem loci Abbate [homine sane candidissimo ac amico meo singulari] recreabam, donec novus quidem cum legendi tum discendi ardor me inflammaret. Supervenit autem ardor ille citius opinione. Itaque statim me contuli ad bibliothecam, non omnibus perviam, ut sacrosanctæ vetustatis reliquias, quarum tantus ibi numerus, quantus nullo alio facile Britanniae loco, diligentissime evolverem. Vix certe limen intraveram, cum antiquissimorum librorum vel solus conspectus religionem, nescio an stuporem, animo incuteret meo, eaque de causa pedem paululum sistebam. Deinde salutato loci numine, per dies aliquot omnes forulos curiosissime excussi." The testimony to the virtue of the Abbot and of his special friendship with him were omitted by the cautious antiquary after that prelate's martyrdom. I have therefore placed them within square brackets.

day the silent scribes added to these treasures by the copying of some ancient tome, or the limning of some fair miniature on the border of a missal;<sup>1</sup> the noble refectory, the spacious *hospitium* in which guests and pilgrims were never lacking all the year round; the Abbot's princely lodgings, "fit only for the King's grace," where five hundred guests would at times sit down together at the prelate's table, and in whose halls<sup>2</sup> a crowd of youths of gentle birth received a liberal education; the innumerable offices and adjuncts which made the monastery look like a small city, and of which the only relic that remains to us is the quaint octagonal kitchen whence food was dispensed every Wednesday and Friday to all the poor of the neighbourhood; the four adjoining parks of which the farthest was not four miles off; the great mere of five miles compass within a mile and a half of the house, well stocked with pike, bream, perch, and roach; the four great manor-houses within three miles' distance, and another in Dorsetshire twenty miles away, all belonging to the Abbot:—all this can hardly be realized now-a-days, any more than we can adequately conceive the position of an Abbot who was richer than the Archbishop of Canterbury, and far more powerful than his diocesan at Wells. Who

<sup>1</sup> Tanner in his Preface to *Notitia Monastica* gives a list of fifty-seven volumes transcribed in the time of one Abbot.

<sup>2</sup> "The 'great chamber' was seventy-two feet long and twenty-four broad." (Dugdale, *Monasticon*, Edit. 1817, vol. i. p. 8.) The stately "King's lodgings" were added by Abbot Bere. When the Abbot of Glaston went abroad he was attended by over a hundred men.

could have imagined in those days that this most sacred sanctuary, to which the whole nation was so affectionately attached, which could boast of an unequalled place in the people's history, and which seemed full and overflowing with strength and vitality, should at one fell stroke be ruined for ever, and that what British, Saxon, and Norman piety had been building up for centuries, should collapse and come to naught at the bidding of one tyrant, with hardly a word of protest, or still less attempt at resistance, from the people around?

But so it was to be, and it was for Richard Whiting that God reserved the sorrowful glory of closing the long list of the Abbots of Glastonbury.

This blessed martyr was born amid the horrors of the Wars of the Roses, of a gentle family settled on the abbey estates in the neighbourhood of Wrington. A monk of this family (probably an uncle of the future Abbot) was Camerarius of the Benedictine Abbey of Bath, and the name is found in the annals of other religious houses. His early life was uneventful. His education was begun at the abbey, and finished at Cambridge (probably at Monks' College, now Magdalen), where he took his M.A. degree in 1483, and where he must have known, at least by sight and reputation, the future Cardinal and martyr, Blessed John Fisher. Another martyr he would know more closely at Glastonbury, when he returned to take his part in teaching in the abbey schools, Blessed Richard Bere (nephew of the Bere who was elected Abbot in 1494), who was brought up at Glaston under his uncle's



care, before he passed to the London Charterhouse and the martyr's crown. It is touching to think that from the lessons of Richard Whiting the boy may have gained his religious vocation and that fervour of spirit which stood him in good stead during his long agony in Newgate. Whiting was priested at Wells in 1501, and in 1505 returned to Cambridge to take his doctor's degree.

He was appointed to one of the principal charges of the monastery, to the post of Camerarius or Chamberlain, which gave him jurisdiction over the dormitory, lavatory, and wardrobe of the community.

In 1525 Abbot Bere died, and after solemn prayers and deliberations, the Chapter decided to elect his successor *per formam compromissi*, i.e., to give up their right of choosing their future Abbot in favour of some distinguished prelate. Cardinal Wolsey was the person selected, and after all the due formalities had been gone through, he named Richard Whiting. Another interesting link with a future martyr comes in here, the Cardinal's commission announcing his choice to the community, being signed by Blessed Thomas More as a witness.<sup>1</sup>

Whiting is described in this document as "an upright and religious monk, a provident and discreet man, and a priest commendable for his life, virtues, and learning."

<sup>1</sup> It may here be remarked that the Benedictines claim Blessed Thomas More as an Oblate or Confrater of their Order, his name being found on the list of the Confratres of the Monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury.

On the 8th of March, the monastic delegates returned from London, and after acquainting the brethren assembled in Chapter with the result of their mission, the procession, chanting the *Te Deum*, wended its way to the church, where a public notary announced to the crowds who had flocked thither, eager to hear the result, the name of the future Abbot, their lord and prelate. In truth, the hardest part of the long business was yet to come, to obtain, that is, the consent of the elect; but after many hours of thought and prayer, Richard Whiting saw clearly that he could "no longer offer resistance to what appeared to be the will of God," and he therefore bowed his shoulders to the heavy burden that was to be laid on them. How heavy a cross none could then foresee, when all smiled around, and the sky was clear and serene. Nine years later who would not have shrunk from the burden Whiting had to bear?

On the 28th of March, 1525, the new Abbot-elect was solemnly blessed in his abbey church by Dr. William Gilbert, Abbot of Bruton, who was also Bishop of Mayo, and acting suffragan to the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

And thus he began his rule with the *Ad multos annos* sounding all around him, strong in the love of his sons and of the people, strong in the favour of the great Cardinal, who was all-powerful in England, but strongest because he put not his trust in princes, nor in any child of man.

His life was a full one, and his occupations many and various. The spiritual head of a religious

community, he was also a peer of Parliament, and the lord or rather the administrator of vast estates. While Abbot, he appears frequently in the State Papers in the fulfilment of these public duties. Thus we find him presenting Christmas gifts to the King, providing hawks, negotiating about advowsons, and engaging lay-brothers and organists.

"He appears," says a Protestant biographer, "to have been a pious man, a good ruler, and a keen sportsman."<sup>1</sup> We own that we have not found much evidence as to the last point, although we find the Abbot, naturally enough, complaining to Cromwell of the way the game in one of his parks had been wasted and destroyed after it had come into the hands of one of the creatures of the all-powerful Minister.

The summons to take the oath of Royal Supremacy in 1534 fell upon Glastonbury, as on the other religious houses of England, like a thunderbolt. And alas! the havoc it worked resembled that of the storm in early autumn, which shakes from the trees in showers their leaves of russet-gold.

It had been calculated, doubtless, that the religious would refuse the oath, and to make this surer it was proposed to them in an ampler and far more offensive form than that which More and Fisher had refused to take. The object was to get a pretext for falling on the religious houses and destroying them so as to secure the rich prize of monastic wealth and lands for the royal purse.

<sup>1</sup> See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. lxi. p. 139. "Whiting," by W. H. Hutton.

The oath therefore required the monks to swear that they would hold the King to be Head of the Church of England ; that the Bishop of Rome, who in his bulls usurped the name of Pope and arrogated to himself the primacy of Supreme Pontiff, had no more authority or jurisdiction than other Bishops, in England and elsewhere, over their dioceses ; that they would for ever renounce the laws, decrees, and canons of the Bishop of Rome, if any of them should be found contrary to the law of God and Holy Scripture ; and that they would adhere to all the decrees and proclamations of the King, and also to all the laws of England, and the statutes of Parliament. In their private or public addresses they were to swear that they would not presume to twist anything taken out of Holy Scripture to another sense, but would preach Christ and His words and acts simply, openly, sincerely, and according to the rule of the Holy Scripture and of Doctors who were truly Catholic and orthodox. In their prayers and litanies they were to bid the people remember first the King as Supreme Head of the Church of England, then the Queen and her offspring, then the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other clergy. They were to oblige themselves and their successors on their consciences and solemn oaths faithfully and for ever to observe all this.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the oath, Rymer, *Fœdera*, xiv. 489. Dixon, *History of the Church of England*, i. 212, 213. Cf. *Calendar*, vii. 1025 : where Mr. Gairdner has described the contents of two volumes of signatures of the clergy in nine or ten dioceses repudiating Papal Supremacy. The diocese of Bath is among these. The declaration

If, as we have said, the object was to make the oath intolerable to the religious, and so gain a pretext for their destruction, this object failed. The required oath was taken in almost all the chapter-houses of the land.

The commissioners apparently came to Glastonbury on the 1st of June, 1534, when the oath was taken by Abbot Whiting, Dom Nicholas London, the Prior, and fifty monks, although the signatures were not attached until September 19th.<sup>1</sup>

It was a terrible fall. No special pleading can disguise the fact, and would that all had expiated their fault as nobly as did the last Abbot of Glastonbury and his companions!

We do not think we should be showing true honour to these servants of God if we attempted to palliate the guilt of such a sin. No doubt they tried to persuade themselves that the oath might be so construed as to make it just and lawful; no doubt they hoped for better times, when the King should return to his right mind; no doubt whatever that they loathed the act demanded of them; yet they yielded, even as Peter yielded in the halls of Caiphas. But like Peter they repented, like Peter they atoned for their transgression with their blood, and by that

to which they are attached is extremely brief but quite sufficient: "*Romanus episcopus non habet maiorem aliquam jurisdictionem a Deo sibi collatam in hoc regno Angliæ quam quivis alius externus episcopus.*" This fundamental principle of the Anglican heresy has been perpetuated in Article xxxvii. of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which has still to be solemnly assented to by all Anglican ministers.

<sup>1</sup> Rymer, *ib.* p. 504.

sorrow and that heroic atonement they have merited the robe of penitence and the crown of martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

Abbot Gasquet, in some instructive pages, has adduced many weighty considerations in extenuation of the guilt of their fall, and in explanation of the sad and extraordinary fact that "throughout England the Blessed John Fisher, and Thomas More, and the Observants, almost alone, were found from the beginning neither to hesitate nor waver," and we refer the reader to his pages.<sup>2</sup>

There were many who, like the Abbot of Woburn, repented as soon as they had sworn, who openly wished that they had died with More and the Carthusians, and who refused to call the King the Supreme Head of the Church, because their "conscience was scrupulous touching the continuance of the Bishop of Rome." Some of these, like the Benedictine Abbot of Pershore, boldly defended the claims of the Apostolic See on the allegiance of Christendom. Others may have argued themselves into the belief that it was their duty to "make

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hutton is strangely mistaken when he says (*Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 277): "A candid examination of the Act of Supremacy, in the light of legal interpretation and constitutional precedent, must show that it was not necessarily contradictory to the opinions which Roman theologians hold dear. It was accepted by many who are still revered on the Continent as pillars of the orthodox Faith," and he instances: "Abbot Whiting." It is needless to say that this is entirely to misinterpret the attitude of the Church towards such a measure, or her judgment of those who accepted it. The fact that some who once had taken it are considered by Catholics to have won the crown of martyrdom is only to be explained by the reasons adduced above.

<sup>2</sup> *The Last Abbot of Glastonbury*, pp. 49, seq.

themselves anathema for their brethren's sake," and thus to save their subjects from the loss of their vocation amid the perils of the world. Nor must we suppose that all the monks whose names are appended to the oath were partakers in the evil deed. We are expressly told that "the signatures are not autographs, but frequently in the same handwriting," and probably "the writer of the deed often added many names."<sup>1</sup>

It is possible too that they refused to sign without making a condition, such as was often done, "as far as the law of Christ allowed," or something similar; and Blessed Hugh Cook of Reading is said by an anonymous libeller, to whom we owe much of our scanty knowledge of the three Abbots, to have "added prettily in his own conscience these words following (Supreme Head), 'of the Temporal Church,' saith he, 'but not of the Spiritual Church.'"

But to return to Abbot Whiting. The King's scheme had failed: for a time Glastonbury was safe. For a time, but not for long. Cromwell, the evil genius of Henry, had soon devised another plan, more subtle even than the last, by which he might hope soon to fill the King's coffers with the wealth of the great abbeys.

In August, 1535, the royal visitors arrived at Glastonbury, in the course of their inquisitorial tour among the religious houses of the West Country

<sup>1</sup> Gasquet, *op. cit.* p. 47, on authority of "Mr. Devon, who drew up the list" for publication. An examination, however, of the original Glastonbury document, still preserved at the Record Office, leads me to believe that in this case the signatures are almost all autograph. See Appendix A.

in quest of accusations, which might be used to cloak a general attack upon monasticism. Again they failed so far as Abbot Whiting's monks were concerned.

"At Bruton and at Glastonbury there is nothing notable," writes the infamous Layton to Cromwell; "the brethren be kept so strait that they cannot offend"—adding with the coarse malignity of a low mind: "but fain they would if they might, as they confess, and so the fault is not with them,"<sup>1</sup> the fellow's only conception of the religious observance of a monastery being the constraint of a convict prison.

Glastonbury indeed was the greatest of those "great and solemn monasteries" in which even according to the royal admission publicly made in Parliament, "religion was right well kept and observed," and for which the Parliament accordingly thanked God.<sup>2</sup> As Godwin, the Protestant Bishop of Hereford wrote in his *Annals*, the monks "following the example of the ancient fathers, lived apart from the world religiously and in peace, eschewing worldly employments, and wholly given to study and contemplation," and the editor of Sander, writing when the memory of the life led at Glastonbury was still fresh in men's minds, says that "the religious were noted for their maintenance of common life, choral observance and enclosure."<sup>3</sup> Layton, however, came armed with injunctions framed by

<sup>1</sup> Wright, *Letters illustrating the Dissolution of the Monasteries* (Camden Society), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Dixon, i. p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> Gasquet, p. 66, note.



the Vicar General of the new Supreme Head of the Church, with the express object of reducing monastic life to that of a gaol, and so to render it intolerable to the religious. In this way, it was calculated, the monks themselves would beg to be delivered from so burdensome a yoke and would "not need to be put forth," but would "make instant suit themselves, so that their doing should be imputed to themselves and no other."<sup>1</sup>

But here again the enemy was foiled at Glaston. The monks against whose virtue a ruffian like Layton—chief of a crew who could, as a Protestant historian has truly said, "ask unmoved such questions as no other human being could have imagined or known how to put, who could extract guilt from a stammer, a tremble or a blush, or even from an indignant silence as surely as from

<sup>1</sup> Letter of two of the visitors, Ap Rice and Legh, to Cromwell. (*Letters and Papers*, ix. 708.) Canon Dixon has some excellent remarks on these Injunctions. (i. 375—381.) They "seemed to propose reformation rather than suppression; but it may be observed that reformation demands a reformer: to create or revive a religious institution, the inspiring example of a saint is necessary; and the monks who were bidden to keep their cloisters and observe their rules by Henry and Cromwell failed to recognize in these exhortations the voice of a Benedict or a Hildebrand. . . . A new *Regula Henrici* seemed to be added to the rules which the several Orders professed, laying on the astonished monks far greater severities than those which they had bound themselves to observe. . . . From their muniments or books the religious orders or places were ordered to erase all statutes which seemed to bind them to obedience or subjection to the Bishop of Rome . . . and were diligently to instruct their juniors and scholars 'that the King's power is by the laws of God most excellent of all under God on earth, and that we ought to obey him afore all others by God's precept; that the Bishop of Rome's authority, heretofore usurped, by no means is

open confession,"<sup>1</sup>—could yet find nothing, neither scandals, calumnies, nor even suspicions—such men were not to be forced from the holy profession they had vowed before God, by harsh regulations or cruel privations.<sup>2</sup>

founded or established by Holy Scripture,' &c. . . . Their rules, their statutes, the customs of their religion, which they had vowed to obey, were to be obeyed 'so far as they did agree with Holy Scripture and the Word of God,' . . . indeed, it seemed that they were to be made to understand that their religion, so far from setting them above others, sank them below others. . . . It is little to be wondered that the monks found it impossible to continue on such terms as these. The jurisdiction of the sanctioner of all their orders denied, their allowed liberty turned to absolute imprisonment, their religion contemned and deprived of all that was characteristic, their rules tested by Holy Scripture, their convents defamed or reproached with hideous crimes, themselves esteemed below the lowest profligate who had learned to cry 'None but Christ;' forced in some points to set aside, in others to go beyond their rules, and at the same time told that their observances were but the rudiments and introductions of true religion: they were compelled to resign at length a corporate existence so insupportable and so ignominious." All this, however, it must be observed, was the result of their pusillanimity in accepting Royal Supremacy. If all had stood out against this iniquity, even Henry VIII. would have been powerless.

<sup>1</sup> Dixon, i. p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> It seems that Layton forgot himself so far as even to speak to Cromwell in praise of Abbot Whiting. "For this error of judgment, when some time later Cromwell had assured himself of the Abbot's temper, he was forced to sue for pardon from both King and Minister." Very pitifully did he write to Cromwell: "I understand by Mr. Pollard you marvel why I praised to the King at the Visitation, the Abbot of Glaston who now appears to have no part of a Christian man. I am a man and may err, and cannot know the inward thought of a monk, fair of outward appearance, but inwardly cankered. Although they be all false, feigned, hypocrite knaves, there is none other [but] of that sort. I beg you to pardon my folly, and henceforth I shall be more circumspect whom I shall commend to his Grace or you. I had never been but a basket-bearer but only by your goodness. Reading, 16 September, 1539." (*Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. 2, n. 185.)

Abbot Whiting soon found "that the injunctions were not merely impracticable but subversive of the first principles of religious discipline," and he therefore begged for certain relaxations. Sir John Fitz-James thus wrote to Cromwell on the 2nd of September, 1535:<sup>1</sup>

"I have spoken to the Abbot of Glastonbury concerning the injunctions given to him and his convent by your deputy at the last visitation, of which four articles are enclosed. The first two extend to every monk in the house, except to those excepted in the second. If the chaplain, steward, cellarer, and one or two other officers who have always been attendant upon the Abbot, are bound by the first two articles, it will much disappoint [disturb] the order of the house, which has long been honourable. It would be well to license the Abbot to dispense with them. I dare be surety that he will dispense with none unnecessarily. As to the third article, they have used to make their leases by one of the religious with secular men appointed to him, at a court, by copy of court roll. The convent was never made privy to the leases, and if they must let by consent of the majority, it would be very tedious both to them and their tenants. The Abbot would be much obliged to you, if you would discharge that article.

"As to the fourth article, some of his brethren would be glad to go abroad and make untrue surmise, so the Abbot may pay for their costs.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, ix. 253.

The Abbot wishes you to order that clause to be spared until he may wait upon your mastership next term, or else to make it that the complainant shall only have his costs if he prove his complaint. The other articles they think very strait, and will sue to you about them more at leisure. Meantime, I doubt not they will keep as good religion as any house of that order within the realm.

“Redlinche, Sept. 2.”

The four articles enclosed run as follows :

“1. That all brethren or monks of this monastery shall eat together on flesh-days in the place called ‘the Mysericorde,’ and on other days in the refectory.<sup>1</sup>

“2. That all brethren except the Abbot, the sick, and those who have made their jubilee,<sup>2</sup> shall sleep together in the dormitory in separate beds.

“3. That the Abbot shall make no waste of goods belonging to the monastery, nor let farms or reversions without the consent of the greater part of the convent.

“4. Each person shall declare to the King, the Vicar General, or his surrogate, any violation of

<sup>1</sup> Flesh-meat being forbidden by the rule of St. Benedict was not allowed in the refectory. But dispensations to eat it on certain days having become common, it was permitted in another room, called significantly the “Misericorde.”

<sup>2</sup> *Jubileum peregerint*, translated in the Calendar “who are performing jubilee.” But I think the sense must be “those monks who have kept their jubilee,” *i.e.*, completed fifty years of profession. Their age would naturally excuse them.

these injunctions by the Abbot or brethren, and the Abbot shall supply the informer with the necessaries for his journey."

It may easily be understood that the third of these injunctions was framed with the object of preventing the Abbots from making provision for the evil days they saw approaching, by transferring some at least of the monastic property to sure hands. If the whole convent had to be consulted, it was calculated that there would be at least one who would betray his brethren to the Supreme Head for his own purposes. That there were some false brethren at Glastonbury, as there were even at the London Charterhouse, is clear from the Abbot's protest against the last article. This struck at the roots of the religious life, and the miserable system of espionage and tale-bearing which it engendered embittered the closing days of English monasticism, and has left abundant traces in the State Papers. Thus the Abbot of Winchcomb wrote to Cromwell, that he had read the injunctions to his brethren, as commanded, and had told them that he would begin complying with one of them, which enjoined him to give a daily instruction on the holy Rule, on the following Friday, two or three days later. Thereupon one of the monks came to him and demanded to be sent up to London at the Abbot's expense. Being asked why he wished to go, he replied that he intended to denounce the Abbot to Cromwell because he had not begun his instructions on the very day he received the order. The poor

Abbot asked what he was to do in this as in other such cases that might arise, desiring to have some rule to go by so as to ensure his peace of mind.<sup>1</sup>

But "it was clearly the royal purpose to let inconveniences be felt, not to remove them," and the Abbots got little comfort from the Vicar General of the Supreme Head. It is pathetic to see how anxious the Abbots were to be on good terms with the all-powerful Minister. Thus Abbot Whiting thanked him in his letters, for "his goodness to this house," and did all he could to propitiate him. When Cromwell had the shamelessness to demand for himself a corrody which had been freely granted to the Blessed Thomas More, he at once gave it him "wishing it a better thing."<sup>2</sup> He patiently submitted to the constant demands made on him by the Minister, a farm for this favourite, a benefice for that, a park for another; sop after sop was thrown to Cerberus, but of little avail were they. The jurisdiction which from time immemorial had been exercised by the Abbots over the town of Glastonbury and its district was suspended by royal authority. "There are many poor people," writes the Abbot in October, 1535, "who are waiting to have their causes tried," and he adds that he cannot

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, ix. n. 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, ix. nn. 188, 313. Mr. Hutton somewhat ungenerously reproaches Abbot Whiting for this compliance, as if it showed his sympathy with the enemies of Blessed Thomas. But it is clear he had no choice in the matter, and it was best to make a virtue of necessity. (See his *Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 252.)

believe that the King's pleasure has been rightly stated in Doctor Layton's orders.<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell, however, was exceeding anxious that the monastic property should remain intact, so that the King might not lose any part of the longed-for prey. He was therefore careful to assure the world (an assurance repeated over and over again in the course of the four years that remained) that there was no intention whatever of suppressing the Abbey.<sup>2</sup>

In 1536 the lesser monasteries fell into the King's hands; it was but the beginning of the end. Rivers of gold would not slake Henry's avarice. "All the wealth of the world would not be enough to satisfy and content his ambition," wrote the French Ambassador to his master, Francis I.

The step must have filled the Abbot with the gravest misgivings, but he was determined that, come what might, he would be faithful to his trust. He remained quietly at home among his own people, ever employed in the duties of the great charge, quietly going on as if all were well, "as solicitous about the smallest details of his care as if the glorious abbey were to last *in ævum*." Nor did he shrink from showing where his sympathies lay. Thus in 1536 he allowed a friar named John Brynston to preach to the people in the abbatial church against the dangerous novelties in religion that were so rife. The courageous preacher declared that "he would be one of them that should convert the new fangles and new men, otherwise he would

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, ix. n. 681.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, x. n. 445.

die in the quarrel.”<sup>1</sup> This appears to have directed the attention of the Court to alleged sedition in the house.<sup>2</sup>

In or about March, 1538, the Abbot seems to have been again assured that there would be no change.<sup>3</sup> Cromwell declared that the King had no intention whatever of suppressing all the monasteries, and would not have taken those already dissolved save by free surrender. “He does not intend in any way to trouble you or devise for the suppression of any religious house that standeth, except they shall desire it themselves with one consent, or else misuse themselves contrary to their allegiance, in which case they will deserve the loss of their lives as well as of their possessions.”<sup>4</sup>

“You may therefore repose yourself,” continues this hypocritical letter, “giving yourself to God to serve devoutly, to live like true subjects to his Majesty, and provide for the sustentation of your houses and the relief of the poor, with hospitality, *without the wilful waste and spoil that has lately been made in many abbeys*, as though the governors of them minded only their own dissolution. You may be sure that you shall not be impereched (*sic*) by his Majesty, but his Grace will be your shield and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, x. n. 318.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xii. pt. i. n. 567.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiii. pt. i. n. 573. See Mr. Gairdner's note. It is just *possible* that the letter is a draft form meant for the heads of religious houses in the Eastern counties.

<sup>4</sup> An ominous sentence, pointing to the clause in the Act of 1539 which was no doubt already decided on, granting to the King those abbeys which should come to him “by attainder or attainders of treason,” as will be mentioned immediately.



defence against all others. If any man says anything to the contrary, apprehend him, or if that cannot be done, send his name to the King."

Within a year of this letter Parliament met together, and a bill was introduced which practically settled the fate of the few great monasteries still standing in England. Abbot Whiting excused himself from attending this Parliament of 1539; he doubtless anticipated what its business would be. He cannot have been astonished when in April a law was passed which not only by a retrospective clause granted to the King the greater monasteries which he had already illegally seized, but also all which should hereafter happen to be "dissolved, suppressed, renounced, relinquished, forfeited, given up or come unto the King's Highness." And this was not all. It was anticipated that some would never surrender; and therefore care was taken to include such as should happen to come to the King "by attainder or attainders of treason."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the crime was consummated. Men like our three Blessed Abbots had but to prepare for death. Never would they betray their trust; it could only be torn from them with their lives.

Meanwhile the monasteries of Somerset were

<sup>1</sup> The revenues were placed under the control of the new Court of Augmentations which had been constituted in 1536, when the smaller monasteries were suppressed. Some of the abbeys, such as the Cistercian House of Woburn, had been already confiscated, by the attainder of their Abbots, a proceeding which Mr. Gairdner calls "a stretch of the principles of law which it would be hard to justify, even if the Abbots had really deserved attainder." (*Op. cit.* p. 209.)

falling every day. At the beginning of 1539, Glastonbury was the only religious house left standing in the county, and in September a new visitation was determined on. In Cromwell's *Remembrances* (September, 1539) we find the oft-quoted note: "Item, for proceeding against the Abbots of Reading, Glaston, and the other in their own counties."<sup>1</sup> The victims had been marked out and now the sacrifice proceeded with appalling swiftness.

On the 19th of September, three commissioners—Layton, Pollard, and Moyle—suddenly arrived at Glastonbury. Finding the Abbot absent at his grange of Sharpham (part of which still remains), they hurried thither after him. They pestered the old man "with certain articles" dictated by Cromwell, and carried him back to the abbey, where they proceeded during the night to ransack his papers and search his apartments. They found a book of arguments against the divorce, "which we take to be a great matter, as also divers pardons, copies of bulls, and the counterfeit life of Thomas Becket in print; but we could not," they write, "find any letter that was material."

It is stirring to think that his devotion to St. Thomas was one of the pretexts which gained the Abbot his crown; and our thoughts go back to

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Cott. MS. Titus, B. i. 446a. Abbot Gasquet says: "From this it is clear that some time between the passing of the Act giving to the crown the possession of all dissolved or surrendered monasteries, (April) and September of this year, these Abbots must have been sounded, and it had been found that compliance in regard of a surrender was not to be expected."

Blessed Thomas More in his dungeon, rejoicing that he was to die "on St. Thomas' eve."

Next day, more interrogations, the answers showing "his cankerous and traitorous mind against the King's Majesty and his succession," *i.e.*, in other words, his devotion to the Vicar of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Never more would Richard Whiting yield; he would proclaim his faith before men and angels now; "and so with as fair words" as they could, "he being but a very weak man and sickly," they sent him up to London, to the Tower, for Cromwell to work his will on him.

And here the curtain falls over the sad picture. What happened in that dark dungeon where the old man lay preparing for his end? We know not, only we know the result. Searching examinations there were; and secretly, without form of trial, the Abbot, with his brothers of Reading and Colchester, was

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hutton, in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Whiting), says: "There has been much discussion as to the charge on which the Abbot was arrested, but it seems certain that it was not concerning the royal supremacy but the succession to the crown." We shall discuss the point later, but it seems right here to draw attention to the fact that these two matters had the closest connection, since the Pope had pronounced in favour of Catherine's marriage and had condemned the divorce. Where there was no loyalty to the Pope, there was little firm resistance or opposition to the divorce. And now that poor Catherine and her rival were both in the grave, it was only their fidelity to the Pope that made the defenders of the first marriage so obnoxious to the King. It will be noted too that the other charges distinctly favour this view, to keep Papal bulls and indulgences had been declared treasonable to the Supreme Head, and the life of St. Thomas was that of one who died for Papal authority and in resisting royal power, and who had therefore been proclaimed a traitor by Henry VIII. For the commissioners' letter, see Wright, p. 255.

condemned to death by him who was at once "prosecutor, judge, and jury," as we see from his own damning record.

"Item," Cromwell writes in his *Remembrances*, "Councillors to give evidence against the Abbot of Glaston, Richard Pollard, Lewis Forstell, and Thomas Moyle. Item, to see that the evidence be well sorted and the indictments well drawn against the said Abbots and their accomplices." And to sum up all: "Item, the Abbot of Glaston to be tried at Glaston, and also executed there."

The course of legal procedure during the Tudor tyranny has never been described more vividly and tersely.

Meanwhile, Layton and his companions were not idle. Such ransacking of rooms and chests, such prying into every secret corner, behind wainscot, under floor—not without result; such bullying and pestering of unhappy monks and witnesses, till the book of "divers and sundry treasons," committed by the Abbot, "with the accusers' names put to the same," was completed and sent up to Cromwell, who doubtless made good use of it in his long day's interview "with the King's learned counsel . . . for the full conclusion of the indictments."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The original letter, preserved in the Record Office, clearly shows by the creases in the soiled yellow paper that some small book or folded papers have been enclosed. Whatever it was, it is no longer forthcoming. Just at the critical moment we are again deprived, therefore, of a most interesting and important source of information. In view, however, of the common sufferings of these Abbots, who were dealt with together, the common fate which befel them, and the common cause assigned by contemporaries for their

The visitors were indeed hard at work at Glastonbury. They despatched the monks "with as much celerity" as possible, and furnished them with presents with which they had come provided from the King. The servants they also dismissed with half a year's wages. "All were glad to go," they reported, and doubtless the poor men thought themselves fortunate to escape with their lives. All, indeed, were not to do so. The treasurer and the sacrist, with two lay-brothers, clerks of the vestry, were "detected in arrant and manifest robbery," and were promptly committed to gaol.<sup>1</sup> The honest souls of the visitors were greatly scandalized at the iniquity of the Abbot and his brethren who had dared to conceal their treasures. "When they entered the treasure-house they found it nearly empty. There were no more jewels nor ornaments than would have served for a poor parish church; and it seemed likely that they would have to be content with a beggarly sum of £300 which they had seized at their first entry into the abbey."<sup>2</sup> And

death, viz., their attainder "of high treason for denying the King to be supreme head of the Church," as Hall, the contemporary London lawyer (who reports what must have been current in the capital) phrases it, there can be no doubt that these depositions were much of the same nature as those made against Thomas Marshall, Abbot of Colchester, of which we shall hear further particulars.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of September 28. (Wright, p. 257.)

<sup>2</sup> Dixon, ii. p. 153. The commissioners in their first letter from Glastonbury, expatiate with rapture on the glories of the place. "*It is the goodliest house of the sort we ever saw, meet for the King and no man else, and we trust there shall never come any double hood within it again.*" The term "double hood," as applied to a Benedictine monk, is curious, and confirms other evidence that at that time, in England at any rate, our monks wore a hood attached to the scapular, and

this from a house which was the most magnificent, which claimed to be the oldest, and was also the richest in the kingdom; an abbey with an income of £3,000, possessed of four parks, domains, and manors innumerable; furniture, jewels, and ornaments reputed to be of priceless value! Their cupidity was greatly alarmed. However, after a still more diligent search they discovered a quantity of money and plate walled up in vaults and in other secret places: and they heard of more that had been carried off into the country estates and manors of the great abbey.

The venerable Abbot in the Tower was examined as to these "thefts." "By a skilful and severe investigation," says Canon Dixon, "he seems to have been driven to the confession of more concealments of gold and silver." The crime of sacrilege was therefore to be laid to his charge as well as that of high treason, and the robbers and despoilers of every monastery in the kingdom had the inconceivable audacity to arraign the aged prelate on the charge of "robbing Glastonbury church."<sup>1</sup> "Item," the

another over the cowl. The first will no doubt have been of the form still used by the monks of the Cassinese and Beuron Congregations and most others, while the outer one over the cowl was of the longer and more flowing form still worn in the Anglo-Benedictine Congregation. In the French Congregation the double hood was in use until quite recently, but both were of the same shape, though, of course, that on the cowl was somewhat larger.

<sup>1</sup> There is no clear evidence, according to Hutton, that this charge was formally added to that of treason, but it was the common report at the time. It was certainly the charge against the monks who suffered with their Abbot. The commissioners wrote on the 21st of September (Wright, p. 255), that they had found "a fair chalice of gold and divers other parcels of plate, which the Abbot

*Remembrances* proceed, "Certain persons to be sent to the Tower for the further examination of the Abbot of Glaston."

With the usual contempt for even the form of law that marked the whole proceedings, Glastonbury was regarded as royal property before its Abbot had been condemned or even tried. The matter was taken as settled, and on October the 24th Pollard handed over to the royal treasurer the riches still left at the abbey as among the possessions of "attainted persons and places."<sup>1</sup>

And so for one more glance over Cromwell's shoulder, as he notes the prize: "The plate of Glastonbury, 11,000 ounces and over, besides golden. The furniture of the house of Glaston. In ready money from Glaston, £1,000 and over. The rich copes from Glaston. The whole year's revenue of Glaston. The debts of Glaston, £2,000 and above."<sup>2</sup>

And now came the end. There was no need to wait; Glastonbury had ceased to be, and it was time that the old man were dead. Cromwell seems to have changed his mind as to the trial at had hid secretly from all such commissioners as have been there in times past; and as yet he knoweth not that we have found the same; whereby we think that he thought to make his hand by his untruth to the King's Majesty." Dixon says that Whiting "was accused of church robbery, and executed, not for treason only, but for sacrilege." (ii. 153.)

<sup>1</sup> These consisted of 71 ozs. of gold with stones, 7,214 ozs. of gilt plate, and 6,387 ozs. of silver. (Gasquet, p. 93.) As to the vast sums seized at the abbey, see *Letters and Papers*, xiv. ii. nn. 424, 427.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., of course, the debts *due* to Glaston. Cromwell was not going to occupy himself with paying the monks' debts, if they had any.

Glaston; for Wriothlesley says that there was an arraignment in the "Counter." According to all law, the three Abbots, as members of the House of Peers, should have been arraigned before Parliament. But Parliament was not sitting, and law did not go for much in the days of the Tudors. And so we follow the martyr on his last journey homeward, in company with the hypocritical Pollard and other false friends, to the Bishop's Hall at Wells, where all was ready for a mock trial. John Lord Russell had his jury ready, "very diligent to serve the King," and had gathered a concourse of people such as had seldom been seen in that quiet cathedral city. No time for rest or thought was given the old man. It was on Friday, the 14th of November, that he reached Wells, and immediately the business began. It was speedy enough. Though the "worshipful jury" was perhaps not asked to give a verdict, the martyr was not spared a drop of the bitter cup of indignity, outrage, and ingratitude.

Without inquiry, without defence, without a judgment even, the cruel farce was hurried through, and the aged prelate, who stood, like his Master, among thieves and murderers, was taken away to wait the end.<sup>1</sup> But not in peace. The rest he so

<sup>1</sup> "After a careful consideration of the evidence, my belief is that there was no real trial at Wells. The sentence passed in London was probably published to the jury there, but there is nothing to show that it was asked to find any verdict. . . . The presentments in the Counter and at Wells were evidently empty shows intended to impress the populace." (Gasquet, pp. 112 and 96.) Russell, however, speaks of an *arraignment* at Wells. (Wright, p. 259.)



much needed was denied him; more interrogations, more fruitless attempts to extract spoil from the victim, till morning dawned, and the last and closing scene begins.

He is brought to Glastonbury, to his own Glastonbury: he entreats their leave to enter his abbey once more, to embrace and bless his sons, knowing not, alas! that the old monastery has ceased to be, and that his children are wandering homeless exiles over the land; he is laid on the hurdle and dragged over the stones of his town, up the steep Tor Hill to the place of martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> This was "the summit of that hill which rises yet in the landscape in solitary and majestic greatness, the perpetual memorial of the deed now to be enacted."<sup>2</sup> Here, beneath the stately tower of St. Michael, which still crowns that height, the ghastly sentence is carried out in all its revolting details. This venerable Abbot, "very weak and sickly," though he was, by his enemies' own confession, this "model of the monastic virtues," as he has been proclaimed by a Protestant historian,<sup>3</sup> is spared no detail of shame and ignominy in his

<sup>1</sup> Dr. F. G. Lee, in his *Historical Sketches of the Reformation* (Appendix, p. 419), says that: "From a MS. in the handwriting of the late Mr. Sharon Turner, it appears that in looking over certain transcripts of papers from the family collections of the house of Russell he found the draft of a letter from Sir John Russell to Cromwell, in which the former admits that the Abbot was intentionally executed alone, so as to prevent his receiving any sympathy or aid from his two spiritual sons in the Order—who were executed on the same day—and because of his stubbornness and obstinacy."

<sup>2</sup> Gasquet, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, ii. p. 153.

terrible martyrdom. The old man's body, still breathing, is cut down from the gibbet, mutilated, disembowelled, divided, before the eyes of his sons. Before nightfall the blessed martyr's head is fixed over the gateway of his abbey, while his limbs are exposed at Wells, at Bath, at Bridgewater, and Ilchester.<sup>1</sup>

His monks, Dom John Thorne, treasurer of the church, a man of mature age, and Dom Roger James, the sacrist, a young man professed but a short time back, share his fate and his crown. "They took their death also very patiently," begging, like their Father, forgiveness of all they might have offended, so that even Cromwell's agent is moved, and says, with a tenderness strange to him: "Whose souls God pardon."<sup>2</sup>

The martyrdom made an immense impression on all the country-side, as was natural enough. "The memory of 'good Abbot Whiting' has been treasured by generations of the townsfolk, and the Tor Hill is still his monument." "It is easy to understand," says Abbot Gasquet, "how so soon after the event as Mary's reign, the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, with a vivid recollection of the past, were ready and eager to make personal sacrifices for the restoration of the

<sup>1</sup> "At Bridgewater near the market-place, at the borough of Ilchester on the ancient octagonal tower of the ancient Church of our Lady, at Wells over an old gateway, now wholly destroyed, which stood not far from the ancient Cathedral; and at Bath on a spot said to be covered by the handsome Roman Catholic Church of St. John." (Lee, p. 217.)

<sup>2</sup> See the letters, Wright, pp. 259—262

abbey. But even a hundred years later,<sup>1</sup> and even down to the present day, the name of Abbot Whiting has been preserved as a household word at Glastonbury and in its neighbourhood. There are those living who, when conversing with aged poor people, were touched to find the affectionate reverence with which his name was still treasured on the spot, though why he died and what it was all about, they could not tell. That he was a good, a kind, a holy man, they knew, for they had been told so in the days of their youth by those who had gone before."<sup>2</sup>

## II. *The Blessed Hugh Faringdon (vere Cook).*

The Blessed Hugh Cook, usually called Faringdon (probably from the place of his birth), Abbot of Reading, came of a good Kentish family known to the heralds.

He was sub-chamberlain of his abbey at the death of Abbot Thomas Worcester, in July, 1520, when he was elected to succeed him. The election was confirmed by the King on the 26th of September.

<sup>1</sup> Dixon says (p. 155): "The death of Whiting and the sack of Glastonbury made a great sensation and were long remembered. In a ballad of the next century we read:

I asked who took down the lead and the bells ;  
And they told me a doctor who lived about Wells ;  
In the seventh of Joshua pray bid them go look,  
I'll be hanged if that same chapter be not out of his book.

For there you may read about Achan's wedge,  
How that same golden thing did set teeth on edge :  
'Tis an ominous thing how this church is abused :  
Remember how poor Abbot Whiting was used.

(Halliwell's *Somerset Ballads*, apud Wright.)

<sup>2</sup> Gasquet, p. 120.

The Abbey of Reading (like that of Colchester), although of the first rank, since its Abbot was a peer of Parliament, had no such position in the country as that of Glastonbury. It was, however, of royal foundation, having been founded by King Henry I., who chose it as his burial-place, and endowed it with the famous relic of the hand of St. James the Greater, which had been given to him by his daughter, the Empress Matilda.

Henry VIII. visited Reading a few days after the new Abbot's confirmation, and was hospitably entertained at the abbey.<sup>1</sup> He seems to have taken a great fancy to Abbot Cook, and he was wont to speak of him as his "own Abbot." The Abbot, on his side, was not wanting in gratitude. He seems to have taken his side during the divorce controversy, at any rate "while Henry was searching everywhere in England and on the Continent for authorities to support his views on matrimonial law, Abbot Cook sent him a catalogue of his abbey library, and subsequently the books which he thought would serve his purpose."<sup>2</sup> When the King was hunting in the neighbourhood the Abbot would take the opportunity of sending him presents of Kennet trout or hunting-knives.

Abbot Cook has been accused by the Protestant chroniclers, Grafton and Hall, of being "a stubborn monk and utterly without learning," but the very

<sup>1</sup> On the 2nd of October the King was presented with a great present of fish. (*Letters and Papers*, iii. (i.) n. 1008.)

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xviii. p. 206 (sub *Faringdon*), by C. Trice Martin, F.S.A.

contrary appears to be the fact. Browne-Willis appeals in proof of his learning to his "*Epistles to the University of Oxford* remaining in the register of that University," as well as to a book, now exceedingly rare, entitled the *Art or Craft of Rhetorick*, by one Leonard Cox, a schoolmaster of Reading. "'Twas printed in the year 1524, and is dedicated by the author to this Abbot. He speaks very worthily and honourably of Faringdon on account of his learning.'" Cox had been a *protégé* of the Abbot, who "hathe alwayes tenderly favoured the profyte of yonge studentes," and he testifies that Greek as well as Latin was taught in "your grammar schole in this your town of Reading." The Abbot's interest in the young is also shown in his dealings with young James Basset, stepson of his friend Arthur Plantagenet, Lord Lisle. The lad had been entrusted to the Abbot to be educated in his abbey school, and the letters about him that still exist in the Record Office, throw a pleasant side-light on this important branch of Benedictine work as it was carried on at Reading. The parents were evidently as anxious as present-day ones to know how their darling was getting on, and the good Abbot was careful to keep them informed. Thus on the 20th of November, 1534, we find him writing to Lady Lisle that the young gentleman, her son, is in good health, and proves 'a very towardly child both in learning and other things. As he is so young, the Abbot has set him with his under-steward, William Edmonds, who has an honest wife, to see to his

<sup>1</sup> *Mitred Parliamentary Abbeyes*, i. 161.

dressing, for he is too young to shift for himself. And another correspondent, Alexander Aylmer, writes on the same day to the anxious mother, "he shall lack no shirts nor hose. My lord of Reading begs my Lord [Lisle] and her not to mistrust him about the keeping of Mr. James. He is as tender of him as if he were the King's son." At a later date the parents are assured that "Mr. James is merry," and again that the Abbot "maketh much of James Basset and plieth him to his learning both in Latin and French."<sup>1</sup>

Abbot Cook took his share in the public work expected of a mitred abbot. He sat in Parliament from 1523 to 1539, and in the former year was one of the triers of petitions from Gascony and the parts beyond the sea. He attended Convocation in November, 1529, personally and not by proxy, as was not so usual at the time, as did also the Abbot of Glastonbury.<sup>2</sup> But this was a very noteworthy Convocation. It met at the same time as Parliament, under the stately roof of old St. Paul's, in order to labour for the reformation of abuses and the restoration of discipline, while its enemies at Westminster, in spite of the protests of Fisher, were striking their first blows against the liberties of the Church.

On November the 12th they were consulted

<sup>1</sup> Of the Glastonbury School under Abbot Whiting some interesting particulars are given in Collinson's *Somerset*, ii. 256.

<sup>2</sup> In 1522, under the annual grant to be made by the spirituality for the King's personal expenses in France, we find that the Abbeys of Glaston and Reading both contributed £1,000, and the Abbey of Colchester £200.

by Archbishop Warham on the reformation of abuses, especially the manners of the clergy. As to regulars, it was ordained that bad religious should not be permitted to utter slanders against their brethren to the outside world. As we have already seen, an exactly contrary policy was to be adopted by the Supreme Head and his Vicegerent.

On November the 15th a solemn procession was made to implore God's help against the Turks. On the 26th articles against the spread of heresy were submitted to them, and on the 29th the Bishop of Bath produced a list of heretical books which it was desired to suppress. Apparently at the royal suggestion, Convocation determined to grant the King the sum of £100,000 to be levied at the cost of the clergy on their goods, "in consideration of the dangers which beset the Church by the spread of heretical books, which books are everywhere dispersed with a view to bring the clergy in hatred, and deprive them of their possessions, and from whom they look to Henry VIII. for protection."<sup>1</sup> Convocation was prorogued on December the 3rd to April the 29th, but not before the clergy of the Lower House had sent up to the Fathers a spirited protest against the doings of the Commons in Parliament, who by their recent Acts had weakened the liberties of the Church and the force of her canons. They demanded that the Church of England should enjoy the rights, liberties, and immunities which had been granted her by former Kings of England in their charters and concessions.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, iv. (iii.), n. 6047, p. 2701.

In the following summer (July 30, 1530) the Abbots both of Glaston and Reading<sup>1</sup> with other spiritual and temporal lords affixed their signatures to the letter to the Pope, pointing out the evils likely to result from delaying the divorce desired by the King.<sup>2</sup> This concession was symptomatic of the general weakness which led from one act of compliance to another, until it resulted in the final overthrow of the old *Ecclesia Anglicana*.

Abbot Cook was a justice of the peace, and also in 1527 one of the commissioners appointed to take stock of all the corn in barns and stacks, and see that it was put upon the market, the scarcity which was seriously felt that year being supposed to be due to forestalling, regrating, and engrossing.<sup>3</sup>

But let us turn to more serious matters. It appears that Abbot Cook, though of a courteous, complacent nature which inclined him to go as far as he conscientiously could in humouring those with whom he came in contact, was nevertheless a convinced and firm supporter of the Catholic faith. Thus, in the year 1530, when one of his monks, Dom John Holyman, who had been a fellow of New College, was about to take his doctorate at Oxford, the Abbot petitioned the University that instead of lecturing before them, according to custom, he might be allowed to preach in London,

<sup>1</sup> Abbot Thomas Marshall, of Colchester, was elected only in 1533.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, iv. n. 6513. In 1532, among the King's new year gifts we find the Abbot of Reading presenting him with £20 in a white leather purse.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, loc. cit.



where there was greater need of such a man, seeing that the city was already infected with Lutheranism, and where the great popularity that Holyman already enjoyed brought crowds to hear him whenever he appeared in the pulpit at St. Paul's.<sup>1</sup> So too, although like his colleagues he sought to win the favour of Cromwell by granting him a yearly pension (of 20 marks), and seems indeed for a time to have succeeded in his object, yet he did not shrink from braving the indignation of his diocesan, Bishop Shaxton of Salisbury, by declining to submit to his interference in a matter in which the purity of the faith and the discipline of his convent were concerned. The Abbot had instituted a daily lecture on Holy Scripture in the chapter-house, which was given by one of his monks, Dom Roger London, who was as the Abbot testified, "very learned both in divinity and humanities, profiting the brethren both in the Latin tongue and Holy Scripture." But he had the disadvantage (in the Bishop's eyes), of being a strong Catholic, and Shaxton desired that he should be superseded in his office by a nominee of his own, one Richard Cobbes. This was a man after his own heart, who had been a priest and a canon, but who was then "a married man and degraded." Blessed Hugh naturally refused to have such a man in the house, much less allow him to lecture to the brethren; whereupon Shaxton inhibited Dom Roger<sup>2</sup> from reading, and stopped the

<sup>1</sup> Gasquet, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Dom Roger London ultimately got into trouble with the authorities, and a few days after the Abbots' martyrdom we find him in the Tower (Nov. 20, 1539). His ultimate fate is not known.

lectures altogether. However, to his great disgust and disappointment, Cromwell not only refused to endorse his action, but read him a sharp lecture on minding his own concerns. He told the Abbot he need pay no attention to the Bishop's inhibition, and told Shaxton plainly that he would do well "not to meddle further than his office would bear."

But the strongest witness to the Abbot's Catholic principles is an anonymous writer (the style is very like that of Latimer), whose draft sermon composed for the occasion of the martyrdom of the three Blessed Abbots was submitted to Cromwell for approval and left among his papers.<sup>1</sup> It was evidently meant to be preached at Paul's Cross in justification of their martyrdom, but it does not appear to have been delivered, probably because it was thought the less said about the whole matter the better. His testimony is unexceptionable, and his malice has been turned, by God's goodness, into a powerful instrument for the glorification of those whom he meant to vilify.

According to him, the Abbot of Reading "could not abide" the preachers of the new doctrines, and "called them heretics and knaves of the new learning."<sup>2</sup> "If Judas and these Abbots were now alive they would be able to teach him a point of treason for his learning. Their children are so well noosed in treason. . . . Full well and full truly prophesied the great Emperor Christ of such servants, where

<sup>1</sup> R.O., *Dom. Henry VIII.* vol. v. n. 251. Summarized in *Letters and Papers*, xiv. part ii. n. 613, pp. 216, 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 56.

as He saith: *No man can serve two masters at once.* These poperly monkish traitors practised the contrary, for they called always the King's Grace, in the face of the people, *Master*. But they thought nothing less than that, but whomsoever they called Master, they served the Bishop of Rome, as did right well appear by their own words and their own deeds, namely, of the Abbot of Reading. For he was not ashamed to say that he would pray for the Pope's Holiness as long as he lived, and would once a week say Mass for him, trusting that by such good prayers the Pope should rise again and have the King's Highness with all the whole realm in subjection, as he hath had in times past, and upon a *bon voyage* would call him Pope so long as he lived. . . . I cannot tell how this prayer will be allowed among St. Benet's rules, but this I am certain and sure of, that it standeth flatly against our Master Christ's rule. . . . Moreover, was not the Mass, trow ye, properly abused here of the Abbot's part? as to pray for the preservation of one worse than an infidel. . . . Well, I say no more: but I pray God heartily that the Mass be not abused for the like sort of a great many more in England, which wear as fair faces under their black cowls and bald crowns as ever did the Abbot of Reading or any of the other traitors. . . . I wis neither the Abbot of Reading nor the Abbot of Glastonbury, nor the Prior (*sic*) of Colchester, . . . no nor yet John Oynon, the Abbot's chief councillor, was able to prove with all their sophistical arguments that the Mass was ever ordained

for any such intent or purpose as the Abbot of Reading used it."

Besides his loyalty and devotion to the Vicar of Christ, it is clear that Blessed Hugh Cook was, like his brother-martyrs of Glaston and Colchester, a strong maintainer of holy discipline. "These doughty deacons thought it both heresy and treason to God to leave Matins unsaid, to speak loud in the cloisters, and to eat eggs on the Friday," says the anonymous libeller, with a proper disgust for such superstition.

Nevertheless, it would seem that the Abbot of Reading, like his brother martyrs, for a time lost courage, and in the almost universal panic of this reign of terror, accepted at least outwardly the new doctrine of the Royal Supremacy. We have no record of the oath being administered at the Convent of Reading, though it seems very unlikely that the great abbey should have been passed over. But in 1536 the Abbot signed the articles of faith passed in Convocation, which virtually acknowledged the new royal title. It is evident that, like many another, he did so with a very heavy heart, and that he bitterly repented his weakness. No doubt, like another martyr,<sup>1</sup> he would have said "there was nothing that ever he did more grieved his conscience than the oath which he took to renounce the Bishop of Rome's authority." According to the libeller, he made use of a mental reservation. "Gentle Hugh Cooke did not use the same medicine as Friar Forest, but said that, when sworn to the King's

<sup>1</sup> A priest named George Crofts, hanged in 1538.

supremacy, he added in his conscience, 'of the temporal church, but not of the spiritual.'" The fault was washed out in his own life-blood, and to some of us there is a special consolation in the example of a martyr who was not exempt from human frailty.

In 1535 he had difficulties with Dom John Redyng, Prior of Leominster, which was a cell of Reading Abbey. He had committed faults against discipline and had been ordered "to keep the cloister, as a conventual monk of small reputation." He complained to the Prior and Convent of the Mother House that he had been hardly treated, and wished to know if they had been consulted in the matter (April 26). In November he found an intercessor with Cromwell in the person of Bishop Roland Lee (best known to history for his sacrilegious performance of the form of marriage between Henry and Anne Boleyn), who assured the Vicegerent not to believe the Abbot's complaints against Redyng, for he was of as good report as the Abbot himself, in proof of which he alleged that the Abbot had once thought of resigning his abbey in this Prior's favour.

If this incident reflects some credit on the Abbot's zeal for good observance, another letter in the Record Office presumably indicates that he resisted the teaching of heresy. A certain Thomas Hampton wrote to Cromwell in the same year<sup>1</sup> congratulating him on "having banished the errors of the Romish Pontiff and restored the country to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, ix. n. 1008.

liberty," and begging him to use his influence with the Abbot of Reading, "who was his (Cromwell's) most devoted," to get him authorization of the convent under their common seal to act as school-master in Reading. He had already been there three years, but he could not get this necessary authorization. Unless Cook had resisted, Hampton would probably not have had to wait.

The Abbot seems to have retained the royal favour as late as the year 1537. But there were soon to be ominous symptoms of change. The savage and treacherous repression of the Pilgrimage of Grace could not but have made a terrible impression on the people of the southern counties, especially on the monks in whose favour the brave men of the north country had risen.

What Canon Dixon truly calls "the bloody perfidy" of Henry VIII. came out in his treatment of these heroes, who may be called the Machabees of England, more conspicuously perhaps than in any other episode of his disastrous reign. The impression made on the southern monks is abundantly testified to by the documents in the Record Office. We shall soon see an example in the case of Colchester.

At Reading copies of Aske's proclamation were distributed, and one copy at least was made by the Blessed John Eynon, a priest who is called the chief councillor of the Abbot, and was to share his fate. This proclamation set forth the reasons which called the loyal subjects of the King to arms. "Simple and evil-disposed persons," it was declared, "being

of the King's Council, have incensed his Grace with many inventions, contrary to the faith of God, the honour of the King, and the weal of the realm; they intend to destroy the Church of England and her ministers; they have robbed and spoiled, and further intend utterly to rob and spoil, the whole body of this realm. We have now taken this pilgrimage for the preservation of Christ's Church, of the realm, and of the King; to the intent of making petition to the King for the reformation of that which is amiss, and for the punishment of heretics and subverters of the laws; and neither for money, malice, nor displeasure of any persons but such as be unworthy to remain about the King. Come with us, lords, knights, masters, kinsmen and friends! If ye fight against us and defeat us, ye will but put both us and you into bondage for ever; if we overcome you, ye shall be at your will. We will fight and die against all who shall be about to stop us in this pilgrimage; and God shall judge between us."

It was this proclamation, or one like it, which had been distributed at Reading. It is clear that the Abbot was not suspected of complicity, as he presided at the examination which was ordered to be made into the matter.<sup>1</sup> It took place on December 2, 1536, before the Abbot, Thomas Vachell, a Justice of the Peace, John Whyte, the Mayor of Reading,

<sup>1</sup> The Abbeys of Glastonbury, Reading, and Colchester appear among the contributors to the King's expenses in putting down the rebellion. Such contributions, however, were very far from being free gifts.

and others.<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Snow, Vicar of St. Giles's, Reading, deposed that on November the 28th a certain Richard Turner sent him a copy of a letter made by Robert Aske, to deliver to John Eynon, a priest of the church, to make a copy of. Richard Turner lent this copy to Eynon at Eynon's own request. The future martyr confirmed the truth of his Vicar's testimony. The affair was remembered against him, and was brought up again at his trial.

On Sunday, the 4th of November, 1537, we find Blessed Hugh singing a solemn Mass of Requiem in presence of the body of Queen Jane Seymour. He also assisted at her magnificent funeral in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, on November the 12th, and read one of the lections at the Dirge.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the same year we find the first symptoms of serious trouble. On December the 12th the Abbot wrote to Cromwell: "There is sprung up in our country the most lamentable tidings that ever was, that the King and the Lord Marquis of Exeter are dead."<sup>3</sup> This rumour of the King's death seems to have spread all over the south of England. It was traced to a Grey Friar at Lewes, and many poor people were punished for having repeated it. There was of course a great deal of secret discontent in the country at this time, and no wonder! The rising in the North had accentuated this, and no doubt, as Mr. Gairdner says, "the wish was father to the thought." Such rumours were

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xi. n. 1231.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xii. part ii. n. 1060.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* n. 1205.



construed into indications of a treasonable disposition. It might be thought, however, that the Abbot could hardly be blamed for informing the authorities of the matter. However, he had also told his neighbour, the Abbot of Abingdon,<sup>1</sup> and the matter was considered sufficiently serious for an investigation. This was held at Reading before a commission consisting of Sir Walter Stonor, Mr. Vachell, and others, on December the 24th. The Abbot, who was "then lying at the house called The Bear (or Bere) for fear of infection" from the prevailing epidemic,<sup>2</sup> was examined, as also his servant, Nicholas Wilkinson, who had told him the report. Three people were sent to Reading gaol, and one unhappy man named Edward Lyttelworke, "for spreading the rumour and not producing his authority," was sentenced to be put in the pillory for an hour, to have his ears cut off, and to be whipped naked round the town of Wallingford one market-day, and to be pilloried and whipped in a similar way at Reading. He was also left in gaol, waiting the King's pleasure.

The Abbot, however, was graciously pardoned by the royal tyrant, but the matter was remembered against him. Thus the libeller already quoted: "For think ye that the Abbot of Reading deserved any less than to be hanged, what time as he wrote letters of the King's death unto divers gentlemen in

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* n. 1256.

<sup>2</sup> Bere Court, near Pangbourne, was the Abbot's country house. Mr. Gairdner seems to think that the Bear Inn at Reading is meant, but this is less likely.

Berkshire, considering in what a queasy state the realm stood in at that same season? For the insurrection that was in the north country was scarcely yet thoroughly quieted; thus began he to stir the coals *a novo* and to make a fresh roasting-fire, and did enough, if God had not stretched forth His helping hand, to set the realm in as great an uproar as ever it was, and yet the King's Majesty of his royal clemency forgave him. This had been enough to have made this traitor a true man if there had been any grace in him."

Next year Dr. London, Dean of Wallingford, came on the scene as a monastic visitor. With incredible activity this man invaded the midland counties, leaving everywhere desolation and ruin in his track. "The success of a general," says Dixon, "depends on the terror which he inspires, not less than on the number of those he kills. In several of the places where we have traced the movements of Dr. London among the friars, we may observe other houses of them yielding themselves up to the King as if in a panic." From August the 31st to December the 16th of this year we find that nineteen houses fell before him. In the same period fifteen more surrendered.

One of this terrible man's first successes was at Reading, where he arrived on September the 17th, after suppressing on the way<sup>1</sup> the famous shrine of Our Lady of Caversham. Dr. London, who was then new to his most congenial work, describes

<sup>1</sup> Wright, p. 225. Caversham is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Reading.

with great gusto to Cromwell the visit to Caversham. "The image is plated over with silver, and I have put it in a chest fast locked and nailed up, and by the next barge that cometh from Reading to London, it shall be brought to your Lordship. I have also pulled down the place she stood in, with all other ceremonies, as lights, shrouds, crutches and images of wax, hanging about the chapel, and have defaced the same thoroughly in eschewing of any further resort thither. This chapel did belong to Nutley Abbey,<sup>1</sup> and there always was a canon of that monastery which was called the Warden of Caversham, and he sung in this chapel, and had the offerings for his living. He was accustomed to show many pretty relics, among the which were (as he made report) the holy dagger that killed King Henry [VI.] and the holy knife that killed Saint Edward."<sup>2</sup>

On reaching Reading, where he set to work suppressing the convent of the Grey Friars, he wrote to Cromwell mentioning the Abbot. "My lord here doubteth my being here very sore, yet I have not seen him since I came, nor been at his house, except yesterday to hear Mass. The last time I was here he said, as they all do, that he was at the King's command, but loathe be they to come to any free surrender."<sup>3</sup>

The Benedictines of Reading naturally regarded

<sup>1</sup> Nutley Abbey, in Bucks, a house of Austin Canons.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, p. 221. In another letter he expresses his wonder that they did not show the "holy halter" with which Judas hanged himself.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiii. ii. nn. 366, 367.

the course of events with fear and suspicion. The Grey Friars' house was being destroyed (the gutted nave of the church being reserved for the use of a town-hall at the burghers' request) and the religious sent off "in their secular apparel." Would it not be their own turn next?

There were already ominous symptoms that so it might be. In his next letter (dated September the 18th), London, after relating to his master the way he had disposed of the friars and their property, and complaining of the thievish propensities of the poor people of Reading, "who fell to stealing so fast in every corner of the house" that they even carried off the clappers of the bells, adds: "I have required of my lord Abbot the relics of his house, which he showed unto me with good will. I have taken an inventory of them, and have locked them up behind the high altar, and have the key in my keeping, and they be always ready at your lordship's commandment.<sup>1</sup> They have a good lecture in Scripture daily

<sup>1</sup> From MS. Cotton. Cleop. E. iv. fol. 234. Printed in Wright and also in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, iv. p. 47.

THE INVENTORY OF THE RELICS OF THE HOUSE OF READING.

Imprimis two pieces of the holy Cross.

Item Saint James' hand.

Item Saint Philip's stole.

Item a bone of Mary Magdalene with other more.

Item Saint Anastasius his hand with other more.

Item a piece of St. Pancras' arm.

Item a bone of St. Quentin's arm.

Item a bone of St. David his arm.

Item a bone of Mary Salome's arm.

Item a bone of St. Edward the martyr his arm.

Item a bone of St. Hierome with other more.

Item bones of St. Stephen with other more.

read in their chapter-house both in English and Latin, to the which is good resort, and the Abbot is at it himself."

There is evidence that secret messages frequently passed between the great monasteries still left standing, through the medium of a blind harper named William Moore, and no doubt the heads encouraged

Item a bone of St. Blase with other more.

Item a bone of St. Osmund with other more.

Item a piece of St. Ursula's stole.

Item a jawbone of St. Ethelmold.

Item bones of St. Leodegar and of St. Herenei.

Item bones of St. Margaret.

Item bones of St. Arnal.

Item a bone of St. Agas with other more.

Item a bone of St. Andrew and ii pieces of his cross.

Item a bone of St. Frideswide.

Item a bone of St. Anne.

With many others.

There be a multitude of small bones, laces, stones, and ermys, which would occupy 4 sheets of paper to make particularly an inventory of every part thereof. They be all at your Lordship's commandment.

Of these relics the most interesting is, of course, the hand of St. James the Great, patron of the abbey. It was brought to England by the Empress Matilda, and at her request given to the abbey by Henry I. in 1133.

A hand found at Reading, as is believed, among the ruins of the abbey, during the eighteenth century, which was for a time in a museum in the town, and is now preserved at the Catholic church at Great Marlow, is supposed to be this great relic. Father John Morris has described it in *The Month* (February, 1882, p. 272). and gives reason for the belief that it is at least the relic of a martyr. What was more likely than that Abbot Cook should have hidden the principal treasure of his house?

Unfortunately there is evidence to show that a finger of the hand of St. James was given to Henry of Blois, brother of King Stephen, Bishop of Winchester, where it was preserved as one of the chief relics of the Cathedral. It therefore can hardly be identified

each other not to yield.<sup>1</sup> Our three Blessed Abbots in particular had resolved not to let the King have their houses with their lives. The harper was "a staunch friend of the Papal party," and he "travelled about from one abbey to another, encouraging the imprisoned monks, bearing letters from house to house, and doubtless finding a safe way of sending off to Rome the letters which they had written to the Pope and Cardinals."<sup>2</sup>

The libeller devotes to Moore a long and abusive tirade, ending as follows: "When thou becamest a traitorous messenger between the traitorous Abbots, and when thou tookest in hand to lead traitors in the trade of treason, then was verified the sentence of our Master Christ which sayeth, 'When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.' Thou wast blind in thine eyes, and they were blind in their consciences. Wherefore ye be all fallen

with the present hand, which has all the fingers intact. But as the hand shows wounds which in the opinion of experts must have been inflicted at death, and as it was apparently hidden as a relic it would seem to be the hand of a martyr. May it not then really be the other hand preserved in the treasury of Reading Abbey, *i.e.*, that of St. Anastasius? This suggestion, which has not been made before, so far as I know, is strangely confirmed by a paper preserved in the Record Office. (*Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. n. 256.) The Blessed John Rugg, one of our Abbot's fellow-martyrs, did manage to take from the aumbry and conceal the hand of St. Anastasius, which comes fifth in order among the relics in the inventory. This forms one of the articles of accusation against him, one of the charges on which he suffered. The hand preserved at Great Marlow, if it cannot be that of St. James, may very possibly be that of St. Anastasius.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. Preface by Mr. Gairdner, p. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Gasquet, p. 140.

into the ditch, that is to say, into the high displeasure of God and the King. I wiss, Moor, thou wresteth thine harpstrings clean out of tune, and settest thine harp a note too high, when thou thoughtest to set the bawdy Bishop of Rome above the King's Majesty."<sup>1</sup>

Parliament met again at the end of April, 1539; it was to consummate the work of destruction. "Three years of indiscriminate plundering or transference, of sacrilege or unresisted resumption, had now rolled over. It was now time to rebuild the legal sanctuary."<sup>2</sup> Cromwell took care, as he informed the King, "to bring all things so to pass that your Majesty had never more tractable Parliament."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A few other choice specimens of the libeller's eloquence may be appended—with apologies. He calls the followers of the three Abbots "beggars brats;" Blessed John Eynon "a priest eaten with old Duncye;" the others "a ragman's roll of old rotten monks, rusty friars and pockyd priests as seldom hath been heard of." "Almighty God forbid," he piously exclaims, "that . . . our prince . . . should run into ravening hands of such a sight of merciless monks, false friars, and uncharitable canons and other fools of feigned religions." "The Abbot of Reading, Hugh Cooke, thought to have dressed the Pope's dinner, but the King gave him a breakfast for his labour." There is much additional playing on the name of Cooke and vilification of the Abbot, whom he says the King raised from the meanest monk in Reading to be governor of 3,000 marks a year, and "suffered him to pass the time in his Grace's company at shooting" and used to call him "his own Abbot." The like of the Abbot of Glastonbury, whom the King had made of a vile beggarly monkish merchant, governor and ruler of 7,000 marks by the year: "*yet he stuck hardly to the Bishop of Rome and the Abbot of Reading in the quarrel of the Romish Church.*"

<sup>2</sup> Dixon, ii. p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Dixon justly calls it "the most corrupt legislature that ever sat in England."

This Parliament is for ever memorable for three causes. It enacted the Statute of the Six Articles, a new heresy Act, proceeding not from the Church, but from Parliament, at the bidding of the King. "It was made apparently," says Dixon, "in favour of the old learning, at the very moment when the old learning, or at least a great part of the old system, was undergoing the agonies of death." It was the first Act of Uniformity, the forerunner of a series of measures that were to cause untold misery to Englishmen.

The session was remarkable in the second place for the vigour with which it applied the novel and abominable process of attainder of treason. In one comprehensive Bill, passed in less than a week, were included honoured names such as those of the Blessed Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, of the Blessed Adrian Fortescue, and of many other victims both living and dead who were branded as traitors without trial or proof for having "named and promulged that venomous serpent the Bishop of Rome as supreme head of the Church of England."

And in the third place, as we have already seen, this Parliament consummated the destruction of the old monastic system which had been coeval with England's conversion to Christianity. It was the last Parliament to which the mitred Abbots were called, and among them were those of Reading and Colchester. "The mitred Abbots," says Canon Dixon, "sat silent in their place among the Lords for the last time in the Parliament which authorized the destruction of their proud and beautiful abodes.



Their last appearance was pathetic. Some of them came from homes no longer their own. Some were men who had been put into possession for the very purpose of surrendering their houses. Some were burdened with secret understandings which had been extorted from their weakness or their corruption. Others nursed within their bosoms the swelling consciousness of injury which may belong alike to virtue or to vice unjustly treated. They took no part in the debates so far as it is known, and on the other hand, their ears were spared the railing accusations which are said to have been brought against the religious Orders in the former Parliament. There was no need for that now. The rams' horns had ceased to sound now that the city was fallen. What bootied it to resist an army of Achans all intent on the Babylonish garments and the wedges of gold: an army which not the less professed itself to be composed of Israelites indeed, desirous only that the treasure should reach the House of the Lord? And yet it might be asked whether those vast corporations need have been destroyed so easily if their heads had made a firmer and more united resistance. It is only when men speak out strongly that their rights are respected in time of danger. As soon as a cry is raised, it should be met by a counter-cry as loud and bold: to tell the enemy that there is little use in trying there. Great is the power of sound; it can only be overcome by sound."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dixon, p. 129. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica* (1744), Pref. p. xxxviii., says: "By this Act (of April 21, 1539) no houses were suppressed, but all the surrenders, which either were made or should be made,

This judgment is, we think, a just one. And we may take this opportunity of stating that the real cause of the fall of the monasteries was not the corruption but the weakness of their members, and especially of their heads. We find little or no immorality in the religious houses at this period; it was not this which led to their overthrow; but the cowardice with which the Abbots abstained from doing their duty in Parliament cannot be condoned. It was a fault common, no doubt, to the majority of the nation, but nevertheless the blame lies chiefly at the door of those who were directly responsible for maintaining the sacred trusts committed to them. In this we include not merely the Abbots but also the Bishops who, with the noteworthy exception of Fisher, betrayed the cause of the Church.

However, we know that at least two of these prelates left the Parliament House with the firm determination never to give up their sacred trust save with their lives, and, if they did not speak out publicly, it was because they felt that a more effectual protest would be that of silent resistance even unto blood. We shall see that the Abbot of Colchester made no secret of his purpose, and it is evident that, if his brother of Reading was more reticent, he was known to be not less determined.

were confirmed. . . . Eighteen Abbots were present at the first reading of it, twenty at the second, and seventeen at the third; and yet none of them either opposed it or voted against it, but were every one shortly brought to surrender, except the Abbots of Colchester, Glastonbury, and Reading, who could not be prevailed upon by any motives to surrender, and therefore were accused of high treason and executed."

And the end was now very near. On September the 6th, Dr. Layton wrote to Cromwell<sup>1</sup> to inform him that he had dissolved the nunnery of Clerkenwell, and to say that he would be at Reading on the following evening. It appears that the Abbot had been already arrested and hurried off to the Tower. Layton, on reaching the abbey on the 7th, found Thomas Moyle and Mr. Vachell already engaged in "perusing" the monastery and making inventories of the plate, the tapestry, the copes, and all other property and furniture. To this work Layton lent an active hand. "The debts of the house were also computed, and the sum that would be required for pensions. The house and demesnes were seized and handed over to Sir William Penizon on the 12th.<sup>2</sup> But no surrender was taken, and whether any pensions were given does not appear."<sup>3</sup>

From Reading, Layton, Moyle, and Pollard (who

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Gairdner's Preface to *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. pp. xxix. et seq.

<sup>2</sup> In writing to Cromwell, he speaks of Blessed Hugh as "the late Abbot." The vultures were already quarrelling over their prey. Sir William complains that Mr. Vachell wants a share. "I beg your favour that he may not interrupt me." This knight had already written to Cromwell, August 15, to complain that the Abbot preparing for the dissolution was selling sheep, corn, woods, &c., "to the disadvantage of the King." The gross income of the abbey was £25,000 (in modern value).

<sup>3</sup> Thus Mr. Gairdner. But Browne-Willis (op. cit. i. p. 162) shows that some few monks were pensioned. "In 1553, I find only £59 13s. remaining in charge out of the revenues of this late convent to thirteen monks and novices. The execution of the Abbot probably depriving the dependents of their claims to fees and annuities. These monks were Eliseus Burgess (£6), John Fryson, John Wright, John Harpyr, John Mylly, John Turner, Luke Whythorne, Thomas Taylor (£5 each), Robert Bayner

had joined the others at Reading on the 15th),<sup>1</sup> went on to Glastonbury, where, as we have seen, they arrived on Friday the 19th.

Early in September comes the ominous sentence in Cromwell's *Remembrances*: "For proceeding against the Abbots of Glaston, Reading, and other in their counties."

(£4 6s. 8d.), John Souths (£3 6s. 8d.), Richard Pursers and Richard Butts (£2 each)."

Moyle's letter to Cromwell (September 8, 1536) may here be fitly quoted. He arrived at Reading on Saturday the 5th, and joined Mr. Vachell. "The debts appear to be over £500, *but we purpose not to meddle much with the payment of them, unless it be small sums to very poor men.*" They had taken for the King's use one piece of cloth of gold with "pyrled pound garnettes," four of tissue, four of bawdkin, and four remnants. The gold plate (89 oz.), silver, gilt and not gilt, 2,645½ ozs. In the Church are eight goodly pieces of tapestry, but of no depth, thirteen copes of white tissue, and ten of green, which are meet to be preserved. (*Letters and Papers*, xiv. ii. n. 136.)

<sup>1</sup> It seems that while Layton and Moyle were at Reading, the correspondence or "conspiracy" of the three Abbots by means of Moore, the blind harper, had been discovered. The news was brought by Pollard, who arrived on the 15th, with an angry message from Cromwell to Layton to know how he had dared formerly to commend Abbot Whiting to the King, who appeared "neither then nor now to have known God, neither his prince, neither any part of a good Christian man's religion." Layton was much perturbed, and though now Dean of York, thought it necessary to humble himself in the dust. Hence the remarkable letter to Cromwell already quoted. (*Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. n. 185.) So perturbed was he that the letter he wrote on the previous day in conjunction with Pollard and Moyle (n. 171), as to the booty captured at Reading, is actually dated from Glastonbury, although the writers were at Reading. As Mr. Gairdner says, "they were at Reading, but affairs of Glastonbury already filled their minds." In this letter the commissioners mention that they had omitted in their former letter to say that "the specialities come to their hands appertaining to this house (*i.e.*, Reading) amount to £2,000 and above."

Again, lower down, "for the indictment against the Abbot of [Reading] and other.

"Item, a commission of *oyer determiner* into Berkshire for his indictment and trial." This commission for his trial was issued on October the 27th.<sup>1</sup>

The Abbot, however, remained in the Tower like his brother Abbots for about two months. He is mentioned on November 20, 1539, in a list of prisoners there, which includes the names of Dom Roger London, monk of Reading, and William Moore, "the blind harper," besides some of the Grey Friars and others of that town. The prisoners were personally examined by Cromwell himself. Like Blessed Richard Whiting, Abbot Cook was practically condemned before being sent down to Reading for the mockery of trial which was to precede his martyrdom. As the Abbot of Glastonbury had two fellow-sufferers, so it was with his brother of Reading. Blessed John Eynon and Blessed John Rugg shared in his sacrifice and his triumph. It does not seem clear that they were monks, although it is at least probable that they were, and in the Roman decree they are reckoned as Benedictines. Eynon as we have seen was attached to the Church of St. Giles, Rugg (or Rugke, or Rogke) was a prebendary of Chichester, but had retired to end his days in the abbey.

A letter of his is extant written to "his worshipful master William Frende in the close of Chichester" in which he signs himself "your abbey lover." He had obtained dispensation for non-residence at

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. nn. 399, 435. (45).

Chichester. Coates<sup>1</sup> says that he was indicted for saying "the King's Highness cannot be Supreme Head of the Church of England." A paper in the Record Office<sup>2</sup> shows that books were found in his possession both against the King's supremacy and his divorce. He was also accused of having preserved the relic of the hand of St. Anastasius, at Reading, "knowing that his Majesty had sent visitors to the said abbey to put down such idolatry."

At the trial it is said that they confessed that they had committed treason, but nevertheless strove to prove that they were true men. They acknowledged, that is to say, that they rejected the Royal Supremacy, but yet protested that they were none the less loyal subjects of the King. They were of course condemned as had already been determined. "It will make many beware," cries the libeller, "to put their fingers in the fire any more either for the honour of Peter and Paul or for the right of the Roman Church. No, not for the pardon of the Pope himself, though he would grant more pardons than all the Popes that ever were have granted. I think, verily, our mother holy Church of Rome hath not so great a jewel of her own darling Reynold Poole as she should have had of these abbots if they could have conveyed all things cleanly. Could not our English abbots be con-

<sup>1</sup> *Reading*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. part ii. n. 256. "Interrogatories for Sir John Rugke, priest." A book named is puzzling—*Incheiridion Exce*, or *Exces*.

tented with English forked caps but must look after Romish Cardinal hats also? Could they not be contented with the plain fashion of England but must counterfeit the crafty cardinality of Reynold Poole? . . . Could not our popish abbots beware of Reynold Poole, of that bottomless whirlpool, I say, which is never satiate of treason?"

The libeller goes on to vilify Abbot Cook as "master-cook to a great many of that black guard that he was of himself (I mean black monks)," and to express his pious hope that "as God has already purged a great part of the pope-holy cloisters that were in the realm, he will send a general purgation of all that be yet standing."

It was on the same day that the Abbot of Glastonbury suffered (November the 15th), that Blessed Hugh of Reading, with his companions, was led out to suffer at his abbey gate. The same ghastly tragedy was enacted here as at Glastonbury, and the old stones of the gateway, which is still standing, may have been reddened with the martyrs' blood. The Abbot spoke out boldly at the last, professing his fidelity to the Holy See, which, as he pointed out, "was but the common faith of those who had the best right to declare the true teaching of the English Church."<sup>1</sup> He cited as instances such loved and honoured names as Archbishop Warham of Canterbury and Bishop Stokesley of London, men whom he declared to have been guilty of the same "treason" as himself. "And," adds the libeller, "I dare say he accused none of them for malice nor

<sup>1</sup> Gasquet, p. 152.

hatred. For the Abbot as heartily loved those holy fathers as ever he loved any men in his life." Blessed John Eynon spoke in the same sense, and begged the prayers of the bystanders for his soul.<sup>1</sup>

Thus on the same November day Reading and Glastonbury yielded their testimony to England's ancient faith. Thus did the Order that had conquered England for Christ in a long series of bloodless triumphs, now in the day of trial show forth before God and men, in the persons of her noblest sons, that she shrank not from faith's supremest test, nor charity's sublimest sacrifice.

### *III. The Blessed John Beche (vere Thomas Marshall).*

It was but a few days later that the like scene was to be witnessed in the old Roman city of Colchester. Blessed Thomas Marshall (who was also known as John Beche<sup>2</sup>), Abbot of St. John the Baptist's, suffered there in the same cause, on the 1st of December, 1539.

He was educated at Oxford, where he took his

<sup>1</sup> The libeller says Eynon at the last acknowledged that he was guilty of treason, and begged some of the people to desire the King's forgiveness for him, otherwise, he said, he was sure that his soul would be lost. In this (if the report be true) he was probably referring to his alleged complicity in the Pilgrimage of Grace. But by pretending that the martyr thought the King's forgiveness necessary for salvation, the witness has thrown the gravest doubt on his whole assertion.

<sup>2</sup> This fact has caused some confusion. Even Mr. S. L. Lee, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, has made them two distinct persons (vol. iii. p. 458), and says that John Beche succeeded Thomas Marshall as Abbot. But there is no room for doubt that



Doctor's degree in April, 1515. He was no doubt at St. Benedict's or Gloucester Hall, now Worcester College. He seems to have belonged to the Abbey of St. Werburgh at Chester, or at any rate to have ruled that house as Abbot until 1530, and he is counted as the twenty-sixth Abbot of Chester. Blessed Thomas was elected Abbot of Colchester on the 10th of June, 1533.<sup>1</sup>

The Abbot was a strong opponent of the King's new policy, and a friend and admirer of More and Fisher. Nevertheless, like his brother Abbots, he yielded so far as to take the oath of supremacy, which was accepted in the chapter-house of St. John's on the 7th of July, 1534, by sixteen monks. The feeling at Colchester was none the less strongly Catholic. The Sub-Prior, Dom John Frauncis, was accused to Cromwell of "slandorous and presumptuous sayings" against the King and Council.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of a new book brought out by their authority containing nine articles, this audacious Sub-Prior declared that the putters forth of it were heretics, though before they had been but

Beche and Marshall are *aliases* for the same person. The Abbot signed himself "Thomas Beche, *alias* Marshall," in a paper which we shall consider later. The Controlment Roll (31 Henry VIII. m. 36 d.) gives the same evidence. Thomas was probably his religious name.

<sup>1</sup> The *Cartularium Monasterii S. Joannis de Colecestria* has lately been edited, with a scholarly and learned introduction by Stuart Moore, F.S.A., for the Roxburghe Club, from a MS. in possession of Earl Cowper. (Chiswick Press, 1897.) I must acknowledge my obligations to Mr. Moore's labours, though I have been careful to compare the more important documents quoted by him with the originals in the Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vii. n. 454.

schismatics, and that this he would prove on pain of losing his tongue.<sup>1</sup> The Abbot does not seem to have been at much pains to conceal his true opinions. On the 16th of December, 1536, two neighbours of his, Sir William Pyrton and Sir John Seyncler,<sup>2</sup> write to Cromwell to tell him that on Saturday the 15th they were at dinner with the Abbot when Marmaduke Neville came in, with other gentlemen from the North. "I said, 'How do the traitors in the North?'"<sup>3</sup> "No traitors, for if ye call us traitors we will call you heretics," was the bold reply. Neville went on to say that the King had pardoned them or he had not been at Colchester. He further added, 'I am sure my Lord Abbot will make me good cheer,' and when asked why, replied, 'Marry, for all the abbeys in England be beholden to us, for we have set up all the abbeys again in our country, and though it were never so late, they sang Matins the same night.' He added they were 'plain fellows' in the North, and Southern men, though they thought as much, durst not utter it."

The writer of the early life of Blessed John Fisher gives a most touching account of the way in which the Abbot was brought into the toils.

"Those who can call to mind," he says, "the cruel deeds of Henry VIII., the confusion of

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he accepted the oath, and at the dissolution received a pension of £6 13s. 4d., which he still enjoyed in 1553. (Browne-Willis, i. p. 68.)

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xi. n. 1319.

<sup>3</sup> The Pilgrimage of Grace.

things sacred and profane, and the slaughterings of which he was the author, will have no difficulty in recollecting the case of John Beche, Abbot of Colchester. Excelling many of the Abbots of his day in devotion, piety and learning, the sad fate of the Cardinal (Fisher) and the execution of Sir Thomas More filled him with grief and bitterness. For he had greatly loved them; and as he had honoured them when living, so now that they had gladly suffered death for the Church's unity, he began to reverence and venerate them, and often and much did he utter to that effect, and made his friends partakers of his grief which the late events had caused him, and he was in the habit of extolling the piety, meekness and innocence of the late martyrs to those guests whom he invited to his table, and who came to him of their own will, some of whom assented to his words, while others listened in silence. There came at length a traitorous guest, a violator of the sacred rights of hospitality, who by his words incited the Abbot to speak about the execution of the Cardinal and More, hoping to entrap him in his speech. Thereon the Abbot, who could not be silent on such a theme, spoke indeed in their praise, but with moderation and sparingly, adding at last that he marvelled what cause of complaint the King could have found in men so virtuous and learned, and the greatest ornaments of Church and State, as to deem them unworthy of longer life, and to condemn them to a most cruel death. These words did this false friend carry away in his traitorous breast, to make them

known in due season to the advisers of the King. What need of more? The Abbot is led to the same tribunal which had condemned both Fisher and More, and there received the like sentence of death; yea, his punishment was the more cruel than theirs, for in his case no part of the sentence was remitted. Thus he was added as the third to the company of the two former. But why should I call him the third, and try to enumerate the English martyrs of that time, who are past counting?

"The writers of our annals mention many by name, but there were many more whose names they could not ascertain, whose number is known to God alone, for whose cause they died. Yet I hope that some day God will make known their names and the resting-places of their bodies, which were in life the dwelling-places of His Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

On November 6, 1538, a commission was issued to Dr. Lee and William Cavendish to dissolve the Abbeys of Colchester and St. Osyth's,<sup>2</sup> in spite of Chancellor Audley's pleading that one at least of these two great houses might be spared. The Abbot denied the King's right to dissolve his monastery. Sir John Seyncler was sent by Cromwell to see him. He wrote the following account of the interview (November 21, 1538):

<sup>1</sup> B. Mus. Arundel MS. 152, f. 235 d. Cf. Van Ortroys *Vie de Fisher*. The evidence of Seyncler, Trowman, and Nuthake, to be quoted below, confirm, when taken together, every particular of this story.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiii. pt. ii. n. 764.

“Yesterday, being the 20th day of November, I was with the Abbot of Saint John of Colchester, who asked of me what the Abbot of Saint Osyth’s did as touching his house, for the bruit was the King would have it. To the which I answered him that he did like an honest man, for he saith, ‘I am the King’s subject, and I and my house and all is the King’s, wherefore if it be the King’s pleasure, I as a true subject shall obey without grudge.’ To the which the Abbot of Saint John answered, ‘I will not say (so) for the King shall never have my house but against my will and against my heart, for I know by my learning that he cannot take it by right and law;<sup>1</sup> wherefore in my conscience I cannot be content nor he shall have it with my heart and will.’ To the which I said, ‘Beware of such learning, for if ye hold such learning as ye learned in Oxenford when ye were young, ye will be hanged, and ye are worthy; but I will advise you to conform yourself as a true subject or else you shall hinder your brethren and also yourself.’ My Lord, I like not the man. I fear he hath a cankered heart, for he was accused but of late of traitorous words by one William Hall, but he had no witness.”<sup>2</sup>

“Here was treason enough,” remarks Mr. Moore,<sup>3</sup> “to hang an archbishop in those days, let alone a mere abbot.” Shortly afterwards, and probably on this information (according to the same writer), the

<sup>1</sup> This was of course perfectly true. The King’s action was as illegal as it was immoral.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiii. pt. ii. n. 887.      <sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. xxvi.

Abbot was committed to the Tower on a charge of treason, and was a prisoner there up to the 20th of March, 1539.<sup>1</sup> There seems to be no doubt that he clung to the Church of Rome and was strongly opposed to the Reformation and in sympathy with the Northern insurrection—treason amply sufficient in the eyes of Cromwell to seal his fate.

The date of Abbot Marshall's final arrest is not clear, but, in any case, he was in custody before the 1st of November, 1539.

From the 1st to the 4th of this month at Brentwood,<sup>2</sup> John Ryther and Henry Polsted were examining witnesses as to the Abbot's alleged treasonable speeches. They examined Edmund Trowman, who was the Abbot's servant, as to the concealment of plate and money by his master, as well as to his speeches. He testified that the Abbot had said that he would as lief die as forsake his living, that it could not stand with his conscience to surrender his house, and that would to God every abbot was of his mind. He had also heard the Abbot say: "Well, God will take vengeance for the putting down of these houses of religion;" and again, "Two or three of the King's Council hath brought his Grace to such a covetous mind that if all the water in Thames did flow gold and silver,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiv. pt. ii. nn. 438, 439, 454, 458, 459. I give these details of the Abbot's first imprisonment on Mr. Moore's authority, and quote the references as he gives them. But I must add that they do not confirm the statement in the text, and I have not been able to discover from what source this writer can have got his information as to the alleged fact of a first imprisonment.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. nn. 438, 439, 458, 459.

it were not able to quench his Grace's thirst." Speaking of Fisher and More, he had said, "They died like good men and it was pity of their deaths, for they were great learned men and wise men."

On the 3rd of November, Thomas Nuthake, physician and mercer of Colchester, aged forty-four, was examined. He deposed among other things that the Abbot had said that the reason why the King forsook the Bishop of Rome, was in order to marry Anne Boleyn, "and therefore his Grace refused to take the Bishop of Rome for Supreme Head of the Church, and made himself the Supreme Head." He added that those who held with the new acts against the Bishop of Rome were accursed.

Arguing against the Royal Supremacy, the Abbot exclaimed: "Those who made the King Supreme Head of the Church were false heretics, and cursed by God's own mouth," asking a vengeance on the Archbishop of Canterbury [Cranmer], the Lord Chancellor [Audley], and on other the King's Council, saying they were arch-heretics, and do go about to destroy the King and the law of God, rehearsing these words: "*Ecce, Domine, lapides sanctuarii tui jacent in plateis*," meaning that God should take vengeance on such as destroyed abbeys. When the Abbot heard of the deaths of the Bishop of Rochester and Sir Thomas More, he said to Nuthake, they being walking in the garden together a little before dinner, "Nuthake, alas, what wretched tyrants and bloodsuckers be these that have put to death and martyred those blessed clerks and best learned men that were in this realm. They died

martyrs and saints in my conscience for holding with our Holy Father the Pope for the right of all Holy Church"—which word this examate hearing did say: "My Lord, I pray you speak no more of that." Then the Abbot went in to dinner all heavy, sad and pensive. . . . At dinner the Abbot spoke further of the rights of the Holy See, which the King could not lawfully usurp. His words, according to Nuthake, were, "*The Bishop of Rome is only Supreme Head of the Church by the laws of God immediately after Christ, and none other.*"

On the 4th of November, Robert Rouse, mercer of Colchester, was examined. His evidence is printed in full by Gasquet.<sup>1</sup> He gave almost precisely the same testimony as Nuthake as to the Abbot's words against the Royal Supremacy, "that the whole authority was given by Christ unto Peter and to his successors, Bishops of Rome, to bind and to loose, and to grant pardons for sin, and to be chief and Supreme Head of the Church through all Christian realms, immediate and next unto Christ, and that it was against God's commandments and His laws that any temporal prince should be head of the Church."

His evidence too as to the Abbot's speeches about the King's covetousness, the martyrdom of Fisher and More, the insurrection in the north, &c., most closely concurs with that of the last writers. Many people in those days must have agreed with the Abbot (though few dared express their thoughts) when he said, "Would to God the northern men

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 169—172.



had" Cranmer, Audley, and Cromwell in their hands, "for then we should have a merry world, for they are all arch-heretics."

Meanwhile the venerable Abbot was being himself tortured with interrogations. It is sad that he did not come scatheless out of the trial. For a time at least his courage failed him, and he made a piteous attempt to save his life. When interrogated<sup>1</sup> as to these accusations he tried to deny or explain them away. Asked what he had said "concerning the King's supremacy," and "concerning the Bishop of Rome's usurped authority," he replied, "As concerning the first and second interrogatories, for as much as I have read in an epistle of Saint Jerome where he saith that all bishops have like authority, but of *schismatis remedium* in those parties, *elegerunt episcopum Romanum in summum*: by the which saying I take and understand that the Bishop of Rome had his supremacy *jure humano* and afterwards usurped much more authority than ever was given to him by any law. Wherefore now I affirm that our most godly prince elected by the free consent of all his whole realm hath good authority to be, and is supreme head of the same, and this I have said as I am well remembered."

In the like manner the unfortunate Abbot dealt with the other accusations,<sup>2</sup> ending this miserable

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. n. 459. I have consulted the original, which is unhappily all in the Abbot's own handwriting.

<sup>2</sup> He actually brought himself to say that if he stood out somewhat against the suppression of his house, it was in order that he should secure a larger pension! We may add that Mr. Moore is mistaken in saying that Abbot Gasquet should have noticed this

document with the piteous appeal: "And here is all that I have said (as I do remember) most meekly beseeching the King's most gracious Majesty and his most honourable Council to be good to me for the love of God,—per me, Thomam Beech, *alias* Marciall."

This was indeed a sad falling off from the spirit of Fisher and More, and it would neither be honest nor wise to attempt to suppress or even to palliate it. Let us rather thank God Abbot Beche was permitted to wash out the stain in his own life-blood.

It is evident that the Abbot was weakly trying to save his life, at the expense of all he held most dear and sacred; and that there is no reason whatever to doubt the truth of the evidence against him. Nuthake and Rouse were the Abbot's intimate friends, and Trowman his old servant; their accusations against him are far more to his credit than his piteous attempts to deny them.<sup>1</sup> How thankful he must have been if, when he came to his trial, he was able to retract his words; how thankful these attempts had not succeeded, and that he had after all the opportunity of winning the martyr's palm!

The Abbot was sent down to Colchester to be tried<sup>2</sup> by a special commission, consisting of Henry, damaging paper in his account of the Abbot. For when Abbot Gasquet wrote it had not been discovered. He has, however, alluded to it in the second edition of *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, p. 395.

<sup>1</sup> So Mr. Gairdner: "There could be little doubt of the general truth (of the accusations) and as little of what would be the result." (Introd. to *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. p. xxxvii.)

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. nn. 459 and 494, App. n. 43.

Earl of Essex, Sir Christopher Jenny, one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas, Sir John Seyncler and others. There was impanelled a jury of eighteen to inquire, and a jury of eight esquires and eleven gentlemen to try him, and it would appear that John Lucas, barrister of the Temple, who subsequently bought the abbey,<sup>1</sup> was the principal prosecuting counsel for the Crown. "We have no official record of the trial," says Mr. Moore, "but the Abbot appears to have practically pleaded guilty to the indictment, and was convicted." In a letter evidently written shortly after the trial, Sir Christopher Jenny reports the proceedings to Cromwell: "I have no special cause to confirm your Lordship concerning the King's business at Colchester otherwise than Mr. Brown or Mr. Sheriff will declare unto your Lordship at large. . . . The prisoner after his judgment asked the King's Highness, your lordship's and my Lord Chancellor's forgiveness, and acknowledged himself in substance to be guilty according to the effect of the indictment, and showed himself to be very penitent, saving he stood somewhat in his own conceit that the suppression of abbeyes should not stand with the laws of God, and thereby, and by other circumstances, I thought him an evil man in mine own conscience and opinion, if there had appeared no more but his own confession."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From Francis Jobson, one of the visitors of the monasteries in Essex and Hertfordshire, and receiver-general of their possessions while they were in the hands of the Crown, June 6, 1548. See *Letters and Papers*, xiv. pt. ii. App. n. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* App. n. 45.

It appears therefore that the Abbot's assertion of principle was considered by Jenny as more important than his waverings and partial weakness.

Blessed Thomas Marshall was martyred at Colchester, the 1st of December, 1539. A drawing representing the Earl of Essex taking him to execution occurs as the heading of a summary of the possessions of the monastery taken after the martyrdom by Richard Pollard and Thomas Moyle, general surveyors of the King's lands. It is reproduced as the frontispiece to the second volume of Mr. Moore's valuable work. The Earl rides on horseback out of the abbey-gate. He is in great state with trumpeters before him. Behind him walks the Abbot between two men, and guarded by soldiers. In the distance, on a hill, is seen the execution.

There still exists a beautiful relic of the Abbot in the form of a pectoral cross. Dom Gasquet gives illustrations of it in his work, with the following description :<sup>1</sup> "The enamelled pectoral cross of the venerable martyr has been preserved, and is now in possession of the Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. On one side it bears the emblems of the Five Wounds, in the centre the Sacred Heart of our Lord, surrounded by the crown of thorns, above which is the inscription 'I.N.R.I.,' and below the sacred monogram 'I.H.S.,' with the wounded hands and feet of our Saviour. On the back the instruments of the Passion are engraved.

"The following inscriptions in Latin appear in and about the Cross, 'May the Passion of our

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. pp. 173, 174.

Lord Jesus Christ bring us out of sorrow and sadness.'

'This sign of the Cross shall be in the heavens when our Lord shall come to judgment.'

'Behold, O man! Thy Redeemer suffers for thee. He who will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.' The cross opens and within is seen the figure of the Crucified, with a large skull beneath His feet."

It only remains to quote a few words of the libeller whose abusive harangue has been so often cited here. "Is it not to be thought, trow ye," he says, "that forasmuch as these trusty traitors have so valiantly jeopardized a joint for the Bishop of Rome's sake, that his Holiness will after their hanging canvass them, canonize them, I would say, for their labours and pains? It is not to be doubted but his Holiness will look upon their pains as upon Thomas Becket's, *seeing it is for like matter.*"

Thus is the malice of the wicked turned to the glory of God and of His elect: and thus does the malicious slanderer become at once the prophet of the martyrs' future glory, and the most explicit witness as to the cause for which they gave their lives.

ED.

## APPENDIX A.

*The Oath of Supremacy.*

Some account of the documents in which the monks of Glastonbury and Colchester made the fatal act of acknowledgment of the Royal Supremacy may be interesting. They still exist in the Public Record Office. (As we said in the text, that of Reading is not to be found.)

The student will find them by referring to the Deputy Keeper's Report, n. vii. App. ii. n. 9. Augmentation Office. Acknowledgments of Supremacy, n. 34 (Colchester) and n. 57 (Glastonbury).

They are engrossed on parchment, with the fine conventual seals attached, and are preserved in small circular wooden boxes. This has not improved their condition, for the parchment has to be much folded and creased to get it into the box, and this has had the further disadvantage of injuring the seals.

That of Colchester is written very clearly and well in long lines on a strip of parchment more than twice as broad as deep, in a clerkly hand, with many abbreviations. The initial word *Quum* and *Henrico* are in large bold black letters.

The seal is circular. On the obverse is St. John Baptist enthroned with SS. Peter (?) and Paul on either side, and underneath a shield. On the reverse side appears St. John the Evangelist between

two angels. Above the angels are eagles. The seal is unhappily broken.

The deed is dated July 7, 1534. It is signed :

*Per me Thomam Monasterii Sci. Joannis baptiste iuxta Colcestriam Abbatem.*

*Per me Joannem Melford priorem, &c.*

As we said, the renunciation of Papal Supremacy is most explicit.

The document begins :

*"QUUM ea sit non solum Christiane Religionis et pietatis ratio sed nre etiam obedientie regula Dno Regi nro HENRICO eius nominis octavo (cui uni et soli post Christum Jesum servatorem nostrum debemus universa) non modo omnimodam in Christo et eandem sinceram integram perpetuamque animi devotionem fidem observantiam honorem cultum reverentiam præstemus, sed etiam de eadem fide et observantia nra rationem (quotiescumque postulabitur) reddamus et palam omnibus si res postulat libentissime testemur. . . .*

*"Item quod confirmatum ratumque habemus semper et perpetuo habitur[i] sumus quod predictus Rex noster Henricus est caput Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ. Item quod Epus Romanus qui in suis bullis papæ nomen usurpat et summi pontificis principatum sibi arrogat non habet maiorem aliquam iurisdictionem collatam sibi a Deo in sacra scriptura in hoc regno Angliæ quam quivis alius externus episcopus," etc., etc.*

The Glastonbury document is identical in terms *mutatis mutandis*. But it is engrossed on a much larger piece of parchment, of folio size, with the

signatures in three columns. It is not nearly so well written. It is curious that it adds after the words, "Regi nostro Henrico Octavo," "*fundatori nostro præ excellentissimo.*" In what possible sense can Henry have been called a *founder* of Glastonbury?

The signature of the Abbot, "*Per me Ric. Abb.*" is that of a very feeble old man. However, it is probable that emotion made the writer's hand shake far more than usual, and this is natural enough under the circumstances. On a letter of the Abbot's written later than this date, and still preserved in the Record Office, the signature is comparatively firm and bold. These trembling syllables, on the other hand, suggest the agony of mind under which the unhappy Abbot must have laboured when he affixed his signature to the great act of renunciation.

It may be noted that most of the monks sign with two Christian names, but without family name. The first is the baptismal, the second the religious name. Thus, for instance, we have, Thomas *Dunstan*, Johannes *Bennett*, Johannes *Benignus*, Richardus *Beda*, Johannes *Ceolfrius*, Thomas *Appolynar*, Johannes *Arthur*, Johannes *ab aramathia*, Wyllmus *Joseph*, Johannes *Ambrosius*, Johannes *Oswaldus*, Jacobus *Anselmus*, Johannes *Elphegus*, Symon *Edgar*, Johannes *Pantaleon*.

It will be noticed that many of the religious names have special reference to Glastonbury traditions. Even King Arthur, whose grave was shown at Glaston, becomes the name-patron of one of the monks. One of the names, it may be added, is very extraordinary, "*Aristoteles Abuzmmyn*"! It is



perhaps that of a Greek who instructed the brethren in his language.

The seal is most magnificent, and is fortunately in excellent preservation. On the obverse side we have our Lady, holding in her right hand the Glastonbury thorn (?) and in her left our Lord, standing. On her right is St. Catherine, and on the left St. Margaret of Antioch. These figures stand beneath splendid Gothic canopies. Below is the church of Glaston, between two ravens. On the reverse St. Dunstan stands between St. Patrick and St. Benignus. Below is St. Dunstan holding the devil by the nose according to the famous legend, and some fishes (?). This seal is figured in the 1817 edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. i.

## APPENDIX B.

### *The cause of martyrdom.*

There is much obscurity, as we have seen, as to the exact charges brought against the Blessed Abbots, since the indictments and all accounts of the trial have disappeared.

Even at the time people were in a good deal of perplexity as to the matter. "The nature of the charges on which Abbot Whiting was condemned," says Mr. Gairdner, "must be a matter for speculation." So well informed an observer as Marillac, the French Ambassador, writing a fortnight after the martyrdom of the Abbots of Glaston and Reading (November the 30th), admits he could learn no particulars of what they were charged with, except

that it was "les reliques" of the late Lord Marquis [of Exeter].<sup>1</sup> This is not particularly clear, but seems to show that it was for denying Royal Supremacy.

Of course the real reason for their martyrdom was that the King might seize their abbeys, which they refused to surrender. He could only do so by having them attainted of treason. And it is pretty evident that the "treason" brought against them was their well-known attitude as to the Royal Supremacy. This is quite clear in the case of the Abbot of Colchester. It had been made high treason to deny "maliciously" the King's right to be Supreme Head, and the Abbot did deny it. Abbot Cook of Reading also denied it at the gibbet, and no doubt had done so previously. There is no direct evidence, so far as I know, as to Abbot Whiting, because the "book of his treasons" is unhappily lost.

But the opinion of contemporary writers and of all the early authorities on the subject is unanimous. They echo the libeller's statement that the Abbots died "in the quarrel of the Bishop of Rome."

<sup>1</sup> "Ces jours passez ont esté executez deux abbez actaints du crime de lèze-majesté, ung au-devant de la porte de son abbaye. L'un estoit abbé de Classimbury (*sic*) a cinquante mille d'icy, l'autre de Reading a six vingts mille. Je n'ay peu entendre aucune particularité de ce dont ilz estoient chargez, sinon qu'on dict que c'estoient les reliques du feu milord Marquis. La peine qu'ilz ont soufferte a esté d'estre penduz, au quel estat [ont esté] laissé leurs corps [chargés] de grosses chaynes de fer en mémoire et horreur de leurs meffaictz." (*Correspondance politique de MM. de Castillon et de Marillac*, publiée par M. Jean Kaulek, Paris, 1885, p. 145.)

We may cite a few as examples :

Bartholomew Traheron, writing to Bullinger, February 20, 1539-40,<sup>1</sup> says: "Three of the most wealthy Abbots were led to execution a little before Christmas, *for having joined in a conspiracy to restore the Pope.*"

Nicholas Partridge, writing to the same Bullinger from Dover, February 26, 1539-40,<sup>2</sup> says: "There does not exist here a single monk, at least in name. Punishment has lately been inflicted upon three principal Abbots, who had secreted property to a great extent, and had conspired in different ways for the restoration of popery. Good pastors are freely preaching the truth. . . The King, who is exceedingly merciful (!), would willingly desire the promotion of the truth."

Butler wrote to Bullinger the same good news on February the 24th:<sup>3</sup> "The monasteries, wonderful to relate, are all destroyed, or will be before Shrovetide. Of the more wealthy the two Abbots of Glastonbury and Reading have been condemned for treason and quartered, and each of them is now rotting on a gibbet near his abbey-gate, a worthy recompense for their imposture."

The chroniclers agree as to the cause of martyrdom. Hall, who wrote in 1548, says:<sup>4</sup> "The xiii day of November, Hugh Feringden, Abbot of Redyng, and two Priestes, the one called Rugg, and the other named Onyon, were attainted of

<sup>1</sup> *Original Letters* (Parker Society). Letter cxlviii. vol. i. p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 614.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 627.

<sup>4</sup> *Hall's Chronicle*, Edition of 1809, p. 832.

high treason, *for denying the King to be supreme head of the Churche*, and was drawn, hanged, and quartered at Redyng. This Abbot was a stubborne monk and utterly without learning. The same day was Richard Whityng, Abbot of Glascenbury, likewise attainted and hanged on Tower [Tor] hyl besyde hys monastery, *for the said case and other gret treasons*, which also was quartered: and the first day of December was John Beche, Abbot of Colchest, put to execution *for the same confederacy and treason.*"

Grafton (whose chronicle goes down to 1568) copies Hall word for word.

Charles Wriothesley, Windsor Herald, is an independent witness. His chronicle is synchronous with the events described and independent of other chroniclers from the eleventh year of Henry VIII. But he merely says that the Abbots "were arraygned in the Counter and after drawn, hanged, and quartered for treason."<sup>1</sup>

Stow (the first edition of whose *Chronicle* appeared in 1582) is more explicit. After mentioning the fact of the execution of the three Abbots, he adds: "*All [were executed] for denying the King's supremacy.*"<sup>2</sup>

Heylin, in his *History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (Edit. 1674, p. 10),<sup>3</sup> gives the same witness.

"The surrenderies of the former year, confirmed by Act of Parliament, in the beginning of this (A.D.

<sup>1</sup> *Wriothesley's Chronicle*, p. 109 (Camden Society, 1874).

<sup>2</sup> Edition of 1631, p. 577.

<sup>3</sup> The original edition was 1661.

1539), drew after it the final dissolution of all the rest, none daring to oppose that violent torrent, which seemed to carry all before it; but the Abbots of Colchester, Reading, and Glastonbury quarrelled, for which they were severally condemned and executed under colour of denying the King's Supremacy."

Dugdale, in the *Monasticon*,<sup>1</sup> says that Abbot Cook "was drawn, hanged, and quartered together with two of his monks at Reading for denying the King's Supremacy."

It must also be pointed out that Gregory XIII., in authorizing the painting of the three Abbots among the martyrs in the famous frescoes at the English College, Rome, had at his side a witness who was specially competent to testify as to their cause. Father William Good, S.J., the person in question, was in fact a native of Glastonbury, and was educated there, until he was admitted scholar of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1545.<sup>2</sup> He was probably an eye-witness of Abbot Whiting's martyrdom. Being learned in the history of the English Saints, he procured the painting of the famous frescoes, to which we owe the Beatification of our martyrs. He would thus have had exceptionally good opportunities for knowing what he was about when he placed among these pictures the representations of the Blessed Richard Whiting and his companions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv. p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, *Athenæ Oxon.* (1721), p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Ribadeneira says of him: "Vir fuit probatæ virtutis et doctrinæ atque imprimis in historiis Sanctorum Angliæ optime versatus, quorum res gestas in templo Collegii Anglicani curavit

The case of Abbot Marshall is, in fact, the only one which presents any difficulty; the unfortunate paper in which, while in the Tower, he denied the accusations against him and explicitly accepted the Royal Supremacy, was not found until lately, and so could not have been known at Rome when the decree of beatification was issued in 1885. The difficulty will have to be met before any further steps are taken in the cause of his canonization.

I think, however, that it may be urged first that he evidently wrote this paper in an agony of fear, and that it is absolutely certain that it did not in the least represent his real convictions.

Secondly, we may note that at the trial he "practically pleaded guilty," and acknowledged the truth of the charges brought against him, which rather implies that he withdrew these unworthy explanations and denials. Certainly he then said things which made one of his judges consider him an evil man. He expressed once more his old conviction that "the suppression of abbeys could not stand with the law of God," and also said "other things" which unfavourably impressed his hostile critic. It seems hard to believe (considering what we know of his true convictions) that among "the other things" there should not have been some assertion of loyalty to the Vicar of Christ. In the Tower he had asserted that "if the King's visitors had come to take his house, he would have given it

coloribus exprimi, quæ subinde in æs incisæ prodierunt, tacito ipsius titulo vel nomine, inscriptæ: *Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ Trophæa*, Romæ, 1584, folio."

up rather than have the King's displeasure." But at the hour of death he confessed once more his true conviction that such a surrender would have been against God's law and against his own heart and conscience. This increase of fortitude would presumably also have nerved him to declare his true belief as to the far more weighty matter of the unity of God's Church and the supremacy of the Apostolic See. It is evident from the witness of his treacherous friends, that on these two points he had strong, even passionate convictions, and though human frailty might lead him to betray and deny them for a time, at the hour of death he would be true to them and to himself. We know that on the one he was explicit, and it is surely more than unlikely that he was silent on the other. It may also be urged that the very fact that to surrender his monastery went against his conscience, shows that he could not and did not accept the Royal Supremacy. Former suppressions of religious houses had been made with the consent of the Holy See, which alone could make such action valid. But if the Abbot accepted the King as his Pope, he could not have continued to protest that the suppression of his own and other houses was against the law of God. The Pope had the right, he knew, but the King had no such right by God's law. Finally, it may be doubted whether he would have suffered at all, if he had persisted in his acknowledgment of the Supremacy. Such a convert would, it seems, have been more useful living than dead.

More important than any considerations we

can make now-a-days, is the unanimous consent of contemporary writers that he, like the other Abbots, suffered for denying the Royal Supremacy. This makes it, I think, sufficiently clear that the last Abbot of Colchester died a true martyr for the unity of Christ's Church. Nevertheless, I frankly own that more positive evidence on the matter is much to be desired.

ED.

**AUTHORITIES.**—The principal of course are Abbot Gasquet's *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, vol. ii. cap. ix., and his *Last Abbot of Glastonbury* already referred to. See also *English Historical Review*, xii. 781—5, which is an able critique of the latter work by R. W. Dixon. Mr. W. H. Hutton's life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Hearne's *Antiquities of Glastonbury* (1722), may also be consulted.

**RELICS.**—Several secondary relics of *Abbot Whiting* remain. His watch and seals were for a time in the museum at Glastonbury, and a chair at the museum at Taunton; the chair in which he is said to have been tried is preserved in the Bishop's Palace, Wells, where is also the original "Glastonbury chair," which was probably made by Blessed John Thorne; his Register, now in the British Museum (Additional MS. 17,451), has his stamp with three whittings on the binding; a fine silver spoon, parcel gilt, in leather case, is in the museum at Stonyhurst College; a large pewter dish is at St. Benedict's Priory, Colwich; it bears engraved on the rim a shield with whittings. This was given to the nuns by Lady Arundell shortly after their arrival in England after the French Revolution. A large delf dish, fifteen inches in diameter, is preserved by the Visitation nuns at Harrow; it was given to them while they were settled at Shepton Mallet. It is of strong delf, covered with a pattern in reddish gold.



The pegged grace-cup of Glastonbury Abbey is in possession of Lord Arundell of Wardour. The Abbot's bed was at one time shown in the museum at Aston Hall, Birmingham, but it has now been removed and we have been unable to trace its present whereabouts. The watch, Glastonbury chair, stamp on binding, and grace-cup are figured in Abbot Gasquet's *Last Abbot of Glastonbury*.

The pectoral cross of *Abbot Beche* is in possession of Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. It is also figured in Gasquet's work.

## XII.

### THE BLESSED ADRIAN FORTESCUE,

*KNIGHT OF ST. JOHN.*

*Tower Hill, 9 July, 1539.*

THE Blessed Adrian Fortescue, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, is the only one of our beatified martyrs whose picture was not painted on the walls of the English College Church at Rome. He was therefore not included in the first Decree, but the fact that his picture appears at Malta with the aureola of a *Beato*, has secured him a place in the Decree of 1895.

The late Lord Clermont's *History of the family of Fortescue* contains a full account of the martyr, illustrated with copies of two portraits.

The House of Fortescue is said to date from the Battle of Hastings, where Richard le Fort having saved the Conqueror's life by the shelter of his "strong shield," was henceforth known as Fort-Escu. In reference to this tradition, his modern descendants have taken for their motto *Forte scutum salus ducum*, "a strong shield the safety of leaders." Richard's eldest son, Sir Adam, settled at Winstone in South Devon. The

founder of the Salden branch to which Sir Adrian belonged was his great-grandfather, Sir John Fortescue, Governor in 1422 of Meaux, in France. The martyr's father, Sir John, held important posts at Court, and fought on the side of Richmond on Bosworth field. He married Alice Boleyn, and thus Sir Adrian was cousin to the future Queen.

Sir Adrian was born about the year 1476. He is first mentioned in 1499, when he was already married to Anne Stonor, daughter of Sir William Stonor of Stonor, near Henley-upon-Thames. The two families were doubly connected, for in 1495 his wife's brother, John Stonor, married his sister, Mary Fortescue. On the death of her brother John, Lady Fortescue inherited Stonor, but her right to it was disputed by her uncle Sir Thomas, and after his death, by her cousin Sir Walter. Stonor Park was, however, retained by Sir Adrian Fortescue till Michaelmas, 1534. Leland describes it as "a fair park, and a warren of conies, and 'fair woods. The mansion house standeth climbing on an hill, and hath two courts builded with timber, brick, and flint." The fair woods and park are there still, to speak for themselves, and, better still, the ancient domestic chapel remains, dating from the year 1349, and it, like the equally ancient chapel of the Eystons at East Hendred in the adjoining county, has never been used for Protestant service. The old walls at Stonor speak to us, not only of the Blessed Adrian Fortescue, but also of the Blessed Father Campion, whose *Decem Rationes* was printed at Dame Cecilia Stonor's

park near Henley, and who himself stayed there to see his book through the press. Blessed Edmund could hardly have failed to know that a martyr had lived there before him.

To return to earlier days. In 1503, when Prince Henry, a boy of twelve, was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, on February the 18th, Sir Adrian was created a Knight of the Bath. Prince Arthur's marriage to Princess Catherine of Spain had been celebrated on the 14th of November, 1501, and his death followed on April the 2nd. That marriage, so eventful in its consequences, and the other Royal marriage of the King's daughter Margaret to the King of Scotland, which conveyed to the Stuarts the right of succession to the Crown of England, were both officially brought before Sir Adrian Fortescue, as he was one of the Royal Commissioners for levying, from his county of Oxford, aids on those occasions for Henry VII. In 1511 he was put on the Commission of the Peace for the county, his name being the first named in the Commission.

Sir Adrian and his elder brother John of Herts—it is curious that the names, when mentioned conjointly, come in this order—are named together in bonds to pay various sums to the King as fines for murder, riot, &c., between 1503, in Henry VII.'s time, and 1511, when Henry VIII. was King. This does not mean that they were personally guilty of these offences, but that the fines were laid on their estates when the malefactors could not be found. In 1512 the two brothers

were amongst those who agreed to send a certain number of men for war service abroad, and accordingly, in the following year, they took part with the young King, Henry VIII., in his expedition into France. At that time the King of England was in league with his wife's father, Ferdinand King of Arragon, with the Emperor Maximilian and with Pope Leo X., and the object of his invasion of France was to create a diversion in favour of Italy and the Papal States by attacking Louis XII. in Flanders. The King crossed the sea with twenty-five thousand men, of whom fourteen thousand formed "the King's ward," or division. The Fortescues had received their orders on the 18th of May, 1513, to be shipped, each of them with fifty archers and fifty bills, from Dover or Sandwich in the "middle ward," but they were afterwards transferred to the King's ward. The ship in which they crossed was the *Mawdelen of Pole*, or in modern spelling, the Magdalen of Poole, of one hundred and twenty tons, with eighty-seven men; Sir Adrian Fortescue is called "captain," and the charge for the use of the ship for the month was £31 15s. 4d. The standards borne by the brothers are given in a manuscript in the College of Arms. It will be enough to give the bearings of one of Sir Adrian's banners, on which of course the crescent appears, to mark that he was the second son. "*Vert*, a heraldic tiger passant *argent*, maned and tufted *or*, charged on the shoulders with a crescent *sable*, between (in the dexter base and sinister chief) two antique shields *argent*, each charged with the

word *fort*, and three mullets also *argent*, charged with the crescent as before." Sir Adrian's motto was *Loyalle Pensée*, his brother's *Je pense loyalement*. The proper coat of the Fortescues—I omit the quarterings and escutcheon of pretence—was *Azure*, on a bend engrailed *argent*, cottised *or*, a mullet *sable*.

The brothers will have been witnesses of the sights of this brief campaign. The first and most memorable event was the Emperor Maximilian, "wearing a cross of St. George," and serving under the orders of the King of England. Some great military sights there were to see. On the 16th of August, 1513, the French were struck by panic at the Battle of the Spurs, so called, says Holinshed, "forasmuch as they instead of sword and lance used their spurs, with all might and main to prick forth their horses to get out of danger." Another was the sad burning of Therouenne; followed by a display of a different kind, the tournament held by King Henry, in the presence of Margaret Duchess of Savoy, in Tournay, when he had taken it. The Chronicle of Calais tells us that Sir Adrian Fortescue landed at Calais for this campaign on June the 21st, and Sir John with the King on the last day of the month. They re-entered Calais on October the 19th, and returned forthwith to England.

Sir John Fortescue was at a royal banquet at Greenwich just a month before his death in 1517. Sir Adrian was there too, and as both were present in a menial capacity, it may be as well to describe

their positions. The banquet was held on St. Thomas's day; that is to say, the summer feast, July the 7th. There were in all thirty-three people seated at the banquet. The King had the centre place at the upper table, Queen Catherine was on his right, and Cardinal Wolsey on hers; on the King's left was the French Queen, and the Emperor's Ambassador was beside her. Then at the side tables, with English peers and peeresses sat the Ambassadors of France, Arragon, and Venice.

To attend on these thirty-three persons no less than 250 names are given in a paper that was drawn up beforehand, and these are almost all lords or knights. How they could avoid being in one another's way is the difficulty. For instance: Lords Abergavenny, Fitzwalter, Willoughby, and Ferrers, to hold torches while the King washes. To bear towels and basons: for the King, the Earl of Surrey, Lords Richard Grey, Leonard Grey, and Clinton, Sir Maurice Berkeley, and eight other knights. The King's server was Sir William Kingston; and to attend on him, Lord Edmund Howard and fourteen knights, the last named of whom is Sir Adrian Fortescue. Amongst the directions we find: "All the gentlemen to be ready to serve the lords and ladies with drink." Sir Adrian was a Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, but the date of his appointment is not known.

In the following year, 1518, Sir Adrian lost his first wife. The exact date we learn from his own book of accounts, in which fortunately he unconsciously tells us much that concerns him. "Costes

of the beryyng and [what was] done after for the Lady Anne Fortescue, which dyed the xiiij<sup>th</sup> day of June A°.Di., 1518, and A°. R[egni] R[egis] H[enrici] 8<sup>vi</sup>. 10, then Monday, at Stonor." She was buried at Pyrton Church, close to Shirburn, and in the account we can trace the progress of the funeral, and see most of what was done. The Knight begins his record with the purchase of his mourning: "for me and my daughter"—he had two daughters, but one of them was probably married. Then come the "lyvereys,"<sup>1</sup> for making up which he had 2lbs. of thread and needles, for which he paid 20d. Five women servants are named, in the inverse order of their importance, judging by the money given to them, Janet Andrewe, Dame Lewen, Mary Tesdale, Catherine Blackhall, and Margaret Robinson. After the people, we have four yards of black cotton for the pillions, the same for saddles, the same for the hearse, six yards of broad cotton for the wall, and twelve yards of narrow cotton for the rails, and two ells of linen for the hearse cross, the making and sewing of which cost 4d. We now leave Stonor, with an offering to the priests there of 14d. As the payments to the clerk and tailors of Henley were heavy, and we have the entry, "bringing the church gear," probably Stonor chapel was hung with the black hangings that belonged to Henley. A still larger sum was paid "to the church of Henley for hanging the church stuff;" and then, "for the costs of the Dirige and Mass there, 8s. Item, to the stone, for

<sup>1</sup> There can be no object in continuing to give the old spelling.



the hearse light, that is, for the workings, 13s. 4d., and for the waste, 9½lbs., 6s. 4d., and for four tapers of 6lbs. weight, 4s. These the priest had as a duty to the vicar." So it seems that he only paid for what was consumed of the wax burnt round the coffin, but that the four altar candles of six pounds' weight—fine noble tapers, so called from their tapering form—went to the vicar. The wax was 2d. a pound, which, if we multiply by ten, to bring us the modern value, would be not far below our modern price.

Other things were not at all modern. Sir Adrian gave in "alms dole to beggars a penny a-piece to 646 persons;" and his gift "to the preacher of the sermon" at Pyrton was 10s., or in modern money, £5. "To a priest singing there half a year, 66s. 8d., to the clerk of the church there, 3s. 4d., and for wine and wax, 10d."

The good Knight then summed up both sides, and it came to £38 7s. 4d., but there were plenty of other expenses afterwards to enter. The bellringers at the burying got 2s. 2d., the clerk of Shirburn 4d., twenty-four torchbearers, who came apparently from Shirburn to the funeral 4s., the parish priest there 12d. But there was a Dirige and Mass at Watlington, and payments for the waste of torches from Watlington, Henley, Shirburn, and Cupham. For the stone in the chancel the Vicar's deputy received 6s. 8d. But the great entry is, "To the priests (42), and clerks (4), and children (12), to serve and help Mass, 23s. 4d., for wine and wax, 2s., for Mass pence there, 20d." What were these last?

Not, it would seem, fees to the servers ; but perhaps a silver penny given at the Offertory of each Low Mass.

The dinner at the burying cost no less than £10 13s. 6d. There were two beeves and nine muttuns, seven lambs, four calves, ten geese, two capons, twenty-four couple of conies, and fifteen pigs. The cream, butter, eggs, salt, and coals cost 7s. 1d. They sent over from Stonor twenty gallons of wine, eight kilderkins of beer, and a quarter of wheat in bread ; but they had to get more than as much again of ale from Watlington, and more than six times as much bread. The last item of the dinner expenses is 3s. 8d. "to the barber of Watlington for his labour," though what he had to do with the dinner is not said. Besides the 646 poor people who received the penny dole, Sir Adrian notes that there were other poor persons there "by estimation 300 and above." A great funeral was an event for the neighbourhood, if nearly a thousand poor were benefited by it. The whole expense was £42 9s. 1d., or in modern money say £425.

Our readers may think that Sir Adrian had done enough, but he did not think so. Next comes the month's mind, and after that the year's mind. The first item for the month's mind is that "the Vicar's deputy had an ambling nag for the mortuary after the month's mind delivered." The month's mind was kept in three places: first his wife's burying-place at Pyrton, the Vicar of which parish received 2s., forty-six priests there 24s., the clerks and Mass helpers 7s. 2d. Benet for dressing altars 8d. The

bellringers there 12d., the Mass pence amounted to 3s. 8d., that is forty-four pence, which nearly corresponds with the number of the priests; so that, probably, that number of Masses were said that day on the temporary altars dressed by Benet, and the alms for each Low Mass seems to have been 6d., which is just our 5s. At Stonor chapel there were six priests who received 4s., a double alms probably in their case; the Mass pence came to 6d., again a penny for each Mass; and the clerk and poor folk there had 6d. Then Sir Adrian adds, "Item, at the Savoy, I being there at London, in all fifteen Masses that day, 5s.," which would be a lower alms of 4d. There was another great dinner at Pyrton, costing about half what the funeral dinner cost. There was a bullock to eat, and ten sheep, two calves, ten pigs, and ten geese. Eleven kilderkins of beer from Stonor, and twenty-one dozen of bread from Watlington, were sufficient this time. The butter to baste the meat cost 8d., and three cooks were content with 2s. The forty-six priests, no doubt, had the places of honour at the table, but there must have been plenty to spare for the poor. The last item after the dinner accounts is 2s. for "singing, wine and wax." The comma is probably a mistake. The forty-six priests will have done the singing at the Requiem, and as altar-breads were commonly called "singing breads" till far into Elizabeth's reign, so probably the wine used at the altar is here called "singing wine."

The first year's mind at Pyrton has but one entry, besides its cost of 26s. 8d. in one sum. "Item,

for 36 escutcheons of arms both in (12) metal and (27) colours, great and large, to give to divers churches in the country, 36s." He gave Pyrton Church a vestment of black velvet with the appurtenances, but he does not say what it cost. Pyrton was not intended by the good Knight to be his wife's final resting-place. Bisham Priory on the Thames was the place chosen by him, and he set to work to raise a tomb to mark her grave. He gives his orders from monuments that he knew and admired, selecting them from the cloister of the Black Friars in London. To the Black Friars, the Order of St. Dominic, we may gather from a notice fifteen years later, he had a special devotion, for in the summer of 1534 he records, "Given to the Black Friars of Oxford to be in the Fraternity, 12d."<sup>1</sup> In their London cloister he chose Sir Robert Southwell's tomb of marble, and had its like delivered to him in London by the marblers of Corfe in Purbeck, for £8. This was the year after his wife's death. He had it taken to the Black Friars, and there he left it for some time, for he paid "the marbler of the Black Friars for the tomb lying with him two years 3s. 4d." He paid 12d. "for the carriage of the said tomb to Paul's churchyard to the marbler there," and 66s. 8d. "to a marbler in Paul's churchyard for the pictures, writings, and arms, gilt after the rate of Sir Thomas of Parre's tomb in the Black Friars."

<sup>1</sup> This is taken, as some other extracts further on will be, from an account-book of Sir Adrian's in the Record Office, which has escaped Lord Clermont's notice, *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii, n. 243.

The tomb was carried by water to Bisham, at a cost of 7s. 6d., and the expense of its erection was 18s. 4d.

On the last day of March, 1525, nearly seven years after her death, Sir Adrian transferred his wife's body to Bisham Priory. A new coffin was made, and a horse litter to carry it, twenty-six yards of black cotton covered the litter and the horse, and an ell of linen cloth made the cross. Six escutcheons of arms were made, four of which were for Bisham. There were twelve staff torches of wax, and six torch-bearers all the way: five priests went with the body, and the clerk of Pyrton carried the cross the whole journey, which cross as well as the pall belonged to Henley. Seven priests received the body by the way at the three resting places, Tyfeld, Marlow, and Bisham parish church. The *cortège* had had "bread and drink at Pyrton Church first," and at Tyfeld Vicarage they dined. It was an abstinence-day, and they had "4 salt fishes 20d., a ling 12d., stock fishes 10d., one salt salmon 14d., four salt eels [congers] 16d., fifty white herring 12d., forty red herrings 8d., fresh fish 4s." The mustard, salt, and onions cost 4d., and the onions are written and no doubt called "ungeons." Three kilderkins of beer, eight casts of manchettes [the best kind of white bread], and twenty-six casts of household bread made up the meal, and when it was over, the Knight paid 8d. "for making clean the Vicarage at Tyfeld and y<sup>e</sup> wessel" [*la vaisselle*, the dishes and spoons].

Master Prior at Bisham was paid 66s. 8d. "for

her laystone there," and 31s. 8d. was "given to him and his convent for the Dirige, the Mass, and other business." "The Vicar of Bisham for the claim of a mortuary," the funeral not being in his church, received 6s. 8d. Half that sum was paid to each of the churches at Pyrton, Tyfeld, and Marlow, and 2s. to Bisham parish church for torchwastes and ringings. The bread and drink at Bisham Priory at the burial cost 3s. 4d., the torchbearers got 4d. for "drinking homeward," the men of Henley 14d. for drinking at Henley, "Master Whitton and the priests drinking at Marlow," 2s.

At Bisham, Lady Fortescue rested among her ancestors, Lord Clermont tells us, the Montacutes Earls of Salisbury, Richard Neville the King-maker, her grandfather's brother and her grandfather himself, the Marquis of Montague. But alas! she was not destined to rest there in peace. In August, 1538, Sir Adrian records that he has paid for his tomb again "at the razing of Bisham Priory, 20s." He had to repurchase it, for the King had given Bisham away bodily with all that it contained. So Sir Adrian had to pay for the taking it down and for the costs to the water, and for carrying it to Henley, "and for the image of the Trinity 8d., and for a new small coffin 4d." Twenty years have gone by since her death, and all that remains of the wife of his bosom can now go into "a new small coffin;" and he pays Richard Hall "for his labour in the said cause and bringing the coffin with the bones to Brightwell Church, and to the clerk for making the grave by the high altar there the 11th day of

August." Sir Adrian Fortescue of Brightwell, Oxon, is what our martyr is called in the Act of Parliament that attainted him.

But we must not move on so fast. Before leaving funerals we must add that Sir Adrian bought "at the razing of Abingdon monastery church" a high marble tomb, apparently for his own resting-place some day; but that, as we shall see, was not to be. And he erected a monument to his father at Bishop's Hatfield to which his brother contributed a small sum, and this shows that Sir Adrian, though the younger brother, was the wealthier of the two. He at the same time contributed largely to Hatfield Church, giving two great candlesticks for the altar, two "papis of bone and glass" (whatever they may be), two tin cruets, a table of the crucifix, a table of the "Oracion," a vestment of red camlet, two great forms, and then four great forms more, two towels for the priests' hands, a new great door (the wood and iron work cost 40s., the lock 3s. 4d.), "a great tabernacle for the altar, bought at Calais in the war time" for 20s., which came to London by ship and then was sent down to Hatfield, mended and set up, for 21s. 4d. more: at Michaelmas, 1526, "a new altar cloth and two curtains of red and green French say [serge], lined with buckram and fringed, price in all 11s.," three and a half yards of blue buckram to cover the altar, 17½d.; and lastly, "sent thither at Whitsuntide [1529], two linen altar cloths and a linen corporal after the robbing of the church," 7s. 6d. Sir Humphrey, the priest, twice came up from Hatfield to see Sir Adrian; the costs of his

journey the first time being 3s. 4d. and the second time 20d.

We have now done with funerals, and we go back again to the gay world, and indeed to the world at its gayest, for early in 1520, Sir Adrian received a summons<sup>1</sup> from the King to accompany the Queen to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. He was bidden to take with him "ten tall personages well and conveniently apparelled," and he was to appoint himself in apparel as to his degree, the honour of the King and of the realm, appertained; but he was to convey with him over the sea for his own riding and otherwise not above three horses, and he was to repair to the Queen by May the 1st.

It must have cost Sir Adrian not a little to apparel himself and his "ten tall personages," so as to be in keeping with the reckless expenditure of Henry VIII. and Francis I. At the same time it was an honour to be chosen on such an occasion, of which no doubt many a knight would be jealous, and the choice was in all probability a mark of favour on the part of Cardinal Wolsey, by whom all the arrangements were made.

Whether Sir Adrian accompanied King Henry to Gravelines on July the 10th, where the English King had an interview with the Emperor, we do not know. As he was in the Queen's train it is more likely that he remained with her at Calais, but

<sup>1</sup> Cotton. MSS. *Caligula*, D, vii. art. 118. It must be owing to the seizure of Sir Adrian's property at his attainder that so many documents belonging to him are found in the British Museum and the Public Record Office.



the King and Emperor came there on the next day, "and there continued in great joy and solace, with feasting, banqueting, dancing and masking until July the 14th." Sir Adrian will have been one of the English lords and gentlemen who were "displaced of their lodging" to entertain the suite of Charles. Before the end of the month our good Knight was back again in England, and probably at home.

Two years later,<sup>1</sup> that is in 1522, when the King was expecting another visit from the Emperor, another summons came to Sir Adrian, "forasmuch as it is requisite he shall be honourably accompanied at that time with our lords and nobles both spiritual and temporal, as well for his cheerful and princely receiving, as to conduct him from place to place for the fame and renown of the realm." The King was then at his manor of New Hall in Essex, "otherwise called Beaulieu," as Holinshed says, "where the King had lately builded a costly mansion." The summons is dated April the 4th, and Sir Adrian was required to be at Canterbury on the 27th of the same month; but counter-orders came, and Sir Adrian was wanted for fighting and not for pageantry. On his summons he has written the memorandum: "After the preparation herefore I was commanded to go to the sea under my Lord Admiral, where we were and our lords twenty-one weeks."

<sup>1</sup> Lord Clermont has dated this letter two years too soon, not perceiving that Sir Adrian had himself endorsed it Anno xiiijto, that is to say, 1522.

We have a glimpse of Sir Adrian's preparation on a similar occasion in the following year, in a letter addressed to him in London by John Haywood,<sup>1</sup> who sends him a list of men, partly his tenants, who were mustered for the 1st of July, 1523, with the armour to which they were admitted. One of the men, Thomas Hicks, Fortescue's farmer of Stynchecombe, Haywood could not find. He advises Sir Adrian to allow some to "buy their peace to bide at home, for ye may have prettier men in Henley than there." At Henley they were expecting him to call upon them, and are always ready.

The twenty-one weeks on sea, which were spent as Sir Adrian tells us with the Lord High Admiral, Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, were employed in part in "wafting the Emperor over to the coast of Biscay,"<sup>2</sup> in July, 1522, and then "finding the wind favourable, according to his instructions, the Admiral made to the coast of Brittany, and landing with his people, in number seven thousand, about five miles from Morlaix, marched thither, and assaulting the town, won it. When they had rifled the town thoroughly, and taken their pleasure of all things therein, the Earl caused them by sound of trumpet to resort to their standards, and after they had set fire to the town and burned a great part thereof, the Earl retreated with his army towards his ships, burning the villages by the way, and all that night lay on land. On the morrow after, they took their ships, and when

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. iii. n. 3148.

<sup>2</sup> *Holinshed*, vol. iii. p. 678.

they were bestowed on board, the Earl commanded sixteen or seventeen ships, small and great, lying there in the haven to be burnt. . . . After this they continued awhile on the coast of Brittany, and disquieted the Bretons by entering their havens, and sometimes landing and doing divers displeasures to the inhabitants about the coast. After that the Earl had lain awhile thus on the coast of Brittany, he was countermanded by the King's letters, who thereupon brought back his whole fleet into a place called the Cow, under the Isle of Wight"—now-a-days we call it Cowes—"and then went on land himself, discharging the more part of his people, and leaving the residue with certain ships under the governance of the Vice-Admiral Sir William Fitzwilliam, to keep the seas against the French."

Even if Sir Adrian was then discharged, he was not able to go home, for on September the 2nd of this same year, 1522, the Earl of Surrey with a powerful force—the Chronicle of Calais says fourteen thousand men—in which Sir Adrian Fortescue had his place, marched into Picardy, aided by "a great power of Burgognians," sent by the Regent of Flanders, Lady Margaret of Savoy. Of this expedition Holinshed says, "All the towns, villages, and castles in the country through which they marched were burned, wasted and destroyed on every side of their way." The Earl returned to Calais on October the 16th, bringing "a marvellous great booty of goods out of the country," and he landed at Dover on October the 24th.

"All the residue of the army came over also with the navy, and arrived in the Thames; and so every man into his country at his pleasure." And with this, Sir Adrian's twenty-one weeks of active service by sea and land came to an end. He must therefore have gone to sea in May.

We have already learnt that Sir Adrian was engaged in similar warfare on French soil in 1523, and John Haywood's letter has survived to tell us of his muster of his tenants for military service for July the 1st.

On the 24th of August, 1523, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, crossed over to Calais with an army which Wolsey said was the largest that had been sent out from England for a hundred years. Sir Adrian is mentioned by Holinshed as being in his train. The Castle of Bell was taken and razed to the ground at the end of September, the town of Braye was taken by assault on October the 20th, Montdidier surrendered on the 27th. The result of the "intemperate weather, the lack of victuals, and such other discommodities," was that the Duke of Suffolk led back his army to Valenciennes, and so by Flanders to Calais, to the displeasure of the King, who was preparing to send reinforcements under William Blount, Lord Mountjoy. When Sir Adrian got home we do not know, but this seems to be the end of his personal experiences in the French wars.

And now that we have done with the wars, we turn again to our scanty records of Sir Adrian's domestic life. By his first wife he had two

daughters, Margaret who married Thomas Lord Wentworth, and Frances, the wife of Thomas Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare. Thomas, tenth Earl of Kildare, "Silken Thomas" he was called from the silken fringe he and his bodyguard wore on their helmets, had risen against the English Government in Ireland, and having given himself up to the Lord Deputy on the 18th of August, 1535, was sent to the Tower and there imprisoned until the 8th of February, 1537; when he was, with five of his uncles, hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn. He was only twenty-four years old, so that it would seem that his wife must have been considerably older than he. During his imprisonment the long suit for the possession of Stonor was brought to an end by the Act of Parliament that confirmed the King's award. Stonor Park and one share of the estate was adjudged to Sir Walter Stonor, and the other share to Sir Adrian and to his two daughters after him. And as poor "Silken Thomas" was in the Tower, "a detestable and heinous rebel and traitor to the King's Highness," and so could not agree to the award, it was enacted that nevertheless the Lady Frances should have the benefit of it and that she and her husband should be bound by it. The suit between the two claimants of Stonor Park was not carried on merely in the King's courts, for Sir Adrian was impoverished and his life disturbed by many "riots, assaults, and affrays" between his followers and those of his wife's cousin, Sir Walter. The contest was practically ended by the King's arbitration in 1534, the date of which is determined

by two entries in the accounts, first of 10s. "to the King's Attorney's clerk for writing the King's award," and in Trinity Term 26 Henry VIII. (1534) 20s. 4d. "for the seal of the King's arbitrament between me and Sir Walter Stonor."

In a collection of proverbs made by our Sir Adrian, one is, "An old man is daft that marries a young woman." A man of fifty is not old, and so the proverb did not touch Sir Adrian himself, but the disproportion of age was considerable between him and his second wife, for at their marriage he was twice as old as she was, and half as much again. This was about the year 1530, she being twenty years old and he at least fifty. His first wife had been dead about twelve years when he married another Anne, this time the daughter of Sir William Rede, of Boarstall, Bucks.

Little presents to his mother-in-law from time to time figure comically in his accounts. "For two pair of knit sleeves to give to my Lady Rede, 2s. 6d. Item, paid for 40 oranges for my Lady Rede, 4d. Item, paid for six gallons and a pottle of sack 5s. 5d. a firkin, 8d. Item, paid for an ell and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of canvas to truss it in, 6d., sent to my Lady Rede of gifts." The accounts seem to show that his wife's brother Austin and her sisters Bridget and Margaret, became members of his family, for there are homely entries of linen for Austin's shirts and buckram (save the mark) for Margaret's smocks; and while he was in prison he paid for a yard of yellow Briges [Bruges] satin for Margaret and Bridget's sleeves. Indeed Austin Rede was other-

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wise called Austin Fortescue. He must have gone to Winchester, for three books were sent there to him, and Sir Adrian makes a payment in July, 1533, to the Warden of New College at Winchester, 33s. 4d.

Sir Adrian's second wife bore him three sons, John, who became Queen Elizabeth's Privy Councillor, Thomas and Anthony, and two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. The birth of his second son is entered thus in his manuscript book, now in the Bodleian: "Thomas Fortescue, second son to Sir Adrian Fortescue, Knight, was born at Shirburn in the county of Oxford the Wednesday, being the 13th day of May in the 26th year of Henry the Eighth, Anno Dñi 1534, *hora secunda post meridiem*. Godfathers at the Baptism were Thomas Rede, Thomas Whitton; Godmother the Lady Williams; Godfather at the Confirmation the Bishop of Oxon, that was Abbot of Thame."

The latter portion, at all events, of this entry was not written by Sir Adrian, for his martyrdom was in 1539, and the see of Oxford was not erected by Henry VIII. before 1541, when Robert King, the last Abbot of Osney, was appointed to it. Confirmation followed in those days at once upon Baptism, and the list of sponsors in Henry VIII.'s time always concludes with the Godfather or Godmother, according to the sex of the child, "at the bishopping."

We are now close upon the time of what Sir Adrian calls his "trobilles," the troubles that came upon him through the King's proceedings in religion.

Certainly it would not appear that Sir Adrian precipitated matters. His name appears amongst those to whom lands were assigned out of Wolsey's possessions on his disgrace in July, 1530, and this does not seem like being in the King's bad books. On the occasion of the Coronation of Anne Boleyn, who it will be remembered was Sir Adrian's first cousin, his name occurs<sup>1</sup> more than once. He is among the knights and gentlemen appointed to be servitors "to attend upon the Queen's grace, the Bishop and the ladies sitting at the Queen's board in the Great Hall at Westminster;" and later on, in the same document, he is appointed one of the servitors to the Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer to wit. Still more marked is the entry in his accounts<sup>2</sup> of 3s. 4d. "to the King's messenger on the 20th of September, 1533, for bringing the Queen's letter of the Princess Grace's birth, dated at Greenwich, the 7th"—the Princess Grace, who was born at Greenwich on that day, being the future Queen Elizabeth. Surely Anne Boleyn did not send her letters by King's messengers on such an occasion to many knights of Sir Adrian's position. It seems plain that though he must have known full well that his cousin's marriage with a man whose wife was alive was no marriage, he thought it no business of his, in the words<sup>3</sup> of Sir Thomas More, "to murmur at it or dispute upon it." Besides, it

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 562. Anne Boleyn was crowned on the 1st of June, 1533. Cranmer had been consecrated on March the 30th.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 243.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 289.



must be remembered that sentence was not given by the Pope, declaring Queen Catherine's marriage valid, till the 23rd of March, 1534. There is no other indication of vacillation on Sir Adrian's part—not even the purchase for 10d. of the *Plowman's Tale* and *Colyn Clowte*,<sup>1</sup> nor the fancy for the *Plowman's Tale* that made him transcribe the greater part of it. A man may buy and read books that all the world is talking of, and yet not agree with all that he reads. Sir Adrian bought other books too, but not very many. He gave 3d. "for two prognostications,<sup>2</sup> and a book of algyrm" [arithmetic]; "for five small English books, 9d.; for a large matins book for myself, 16d." "Item, for two psalters, 18d., and for ink, ½d." "The book of the Acts of Parliament anno 25<sup>o</sup>" cost him 10d. Another time the entry is "for filling the ink bottle, 4d.; for ten quires of fine paper, ½ a ream, 6d."

We have seen that Sir Adrian was admitted into the fraternity of the Black Friars at Oxford in July, 1533. He had previously taken a still more important step than this, for in 1532 he was admitted a Knight of St. John of Jerusalem. That distinguished military Order had been driven from Rhodes in 1522, and had acquired the island of

"Hereafter followeth a little book called *Colyn Clowt*, compiled by Master [John] Skelton, Poet Laureate," London. In 8vo, without date. Skelton died in 1529.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing apparently but a kind of barometer. "Prognostications" appear more than once in the Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VII. and among the effects of Henry VIII. was a "Prognostication covered with green velvet." (*Excerpta Historica*, part i. p. 88.)

Malta from the Emperor in 1530. Sir Adrian will have been received by Sir William Weston, at that time Lord Prior of the Knights of St. John, whose heart was broken, eight years after Sir Adrian joined the Order, by its destruction in England and the confiscation of its possessions.<sup>1</sup> As Sir Adrian was a married man, he could only have been admitted as a Knight of Devotion; unlike in this respect to his fellow-martyr, Sir Thomas Dingley, a Knight of Justice, preceptor of the commandery of Baddysley and Mayne at the time of the suppression.<sup>2</sup>

There is some further knowledge of Sir Adrian Fortescue's life during the interval before the storm burst, to be learned from this book of accounts. On January the 23rd he rode to London, taking in his purse from Shirburn £22 6s. 8d. ; he stopped on the way at Colnbrook, and he took with him Master Chamberlayne, whose costs he paid. He probably

<sup>1</sup> The Knights did not resign their goods into the King's hands, and they were suppressed by Act of Parliament. "Will. Weston, Knight, Prior of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, during his life to have an annual rent of £1,000, and such reasonable portion of the goods and chattels of the said house as the King shall appoint him. This Parliament met on the 18th of April, 1540, and on May the 7th Sir Will. Weston, Knight, Lord Prior of St. John of Jerusalem without Smithfield, died, and never received any part of his pension; and the King took all the lands that belonged to that house and that Order into his hands to the augmentation of his Crown, and gave [of] it to every of the challengers above written [at a Jousting at Westminster on May Day] for a reward of their valiantness 100 marks and a house to dwell in of yearly revenues out of the said lands for ever." (*Stow, Chronicle*, pp. 579, 580.)

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. nn. 1138, 1675.

found London in a fog, as his first payment was 6d. for a torch-link. His horses were sent home by Robin and Thome his servants. His first business in London was to lay in a stock of meagre food, which he calls "Lent stuff," on which he expended £4 9s. 2d., and this he sent home by the Thames.

In London he stayed at "his lodgings," that is to say, a house in Blackfriars rented by him, the rent paid for which the Easter following was 16s. 8d. He was in London twenty days, and amongst his payments we find 12d. "to the grooms in the King's chamber," which seems to mean that he had an audience of the King. He had law business in London, and some of it seems to have been in the Ecclesiastical Court, for in accordance with the custom of the age, he sends a present to Cranmer's Chancellor, John Cox, LL.D.; and a curious present it was: "For wyne and orange pyys [pies] sent to Doctor Cokkes on Friday, 2s. 4d. Sent thither on Saturday, at night, Ipocras<sup>1</sup> [and] wafers, 3s." He bought a bonnet of velvet for his wife for 24s. and two yards of fine holland for her "cresomes"—probably the chrisom cloth for her children's christenings. Sir Adrian rode home taking with him his cousin, Lewis Fortescue, who was afterwards a Baron of the Exchequer, whose law services he wanted for the coming Oxford Assizes, in some suit of his against one Ambrose

<sup>1</sup> *Hippocras*, a beverage composed of wine with spices and sugar, strained through a cloth. It is said to have taken its name from "Hippocrates' sleeve," the term apothecaries gave to a strainer. (*Halliwell*.)

Pope. Among the expenses of his stay at Oxford for the Assizes, now and again later, he mentions "to the friars and crier, 8d." What they had to do with one another, that they should twice be linked together, does not appear. It must not be overlooked that our Knight, on the occasion of his visit to London, "gained at play £7 3s. 3½d.," which was a very considerable sum at that period.

Then came another short journey to London for a few days in the month of March; and on his return a journey into Gloucestershire, with six servants, to purchase the manor of Lasborow, near Tetbury, from William Nevyle, Esq., and to take possession of that of Bradeston, which he had previously bought.

Poor man! When he got home on March the 26th, he found Swallow, the King's messenger, waiting for him, bringing him Mr. Cromwell's letters to come to the King's Grace; and, paying the messenger 3s. 4d., he started for London that day and remained there till March the 30th, "Monday the morrow after Palm Sunday, that is five [days] in all on't, 28," which he enters as his "costs to and at London in Passion Week." What he was summoned for we do not know, but the Parliament which had passed the Act of Succession was prorogued on the same March the 30th, "and there every lord, knight and burgess and all other were sworn to the Act of Succession and subscribed their hands to a parchment fixed to the same."<sup>1</sup> The oath was imposed by an Act passed on the very

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, vol. iii. p. 792.

last day of the session. It was on April the 13th that Blessed John Fisher and Blessed Thomas More refused to take the oath of succession, and went into the imprisonment from which death set them free more than a year later. It is not known that Sir Adrian was called upon to take the oath of succession, but he must have returned home with a lively consciousness of coming dangers. "During the Parliament time every Sunday at Paul's Cross preached a Bishop, declaring the Pope not to be supreme head of the Church."<sup>1</sup> The Act of Supremacy was not passed until the next Parliament which met in November, but there was quite enough in these sermons and in the Acts of Parliament of 1533-4 which he bought and took home with him, and especially in the terms of the oath of succession, to make him resolve to be prepared.

He came home by Assenden, staying at Hochtyde Court, and on his return to Shirburn, he gave presents "to the wives" of the neighbouring parishes, Salley, Pishull, Pirton and Shirburn "for the church." He also gave "to the bonfires, to drink, besides wood, 8d. To the wives to drink on St. Thomas's even at the fire, 8d."<sup>2</sup> Again his stay

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, vol. iii. p. 792.

<sup>2</sup> The eve of the Translation of St. Thomas, July the 6th, seems to have been thus kept. For instance, at Canterbury, in the accounts of the City Chamberlain, we have "1517-18. For 10lbs. of gunpowder against the watch on St. Thomas's even, *pretium libra*, 8d. 1521-2. For a staff and a banner to bear before the Mayor's pikes and the guns on St. Thomas's eve. 1527-8. For 9 lbs. of corn powder for the watch on St. Thomas's even." (Dr. Brigstocke

at home was very short, for on April the 29th he started once more for London. This time his business was the conclusion of his lawsuit with Sir Walter Stonor. He was met on reaching London by two King's messengers, and he enters in his accounts the names of the lawyers he employs and the fees he gives them "for devising answers to Sir Walter Stonor's articles." His own plea was that "by the courtesy of England" he was entitled to his wife's property for his life and her children after him. He went to Greenwich, where the King probably was, on Ascension Day, again on the Friday, and on Sunday, May the 10th, paying a couple of shillings boat hire each time. Among his various expenses we have the simple entry, "Paid for 4 pair of small shoon for my little son John and Mary, 11d." His costs in London were £4 8s. for himself and two servants, and he reached home once more on May the 22nd. During this absence his second son Thomas was born.

On June the 9th he set out for London again and he returned on Sunday the 21st. On July the 3rd his face was turned towards London once more, and in the midst of this absence he paid 8d. "for carrying a letter to my wife in haste." His business

Sheppard's report; Hist. MSS. Commission, 9th rep. App. p. 152.) The First Vespers were always solemnly kept. Thus in 1504 the offerings at "the Martyrdom" in Canterbury Cathedral were, on the eve 7s., and the feast of the Translation, 3s. 4d. (*Ibid.* p. 126.) It was on the eve that Blessed Thomas More was martyred. "To-morrow," he wrote to his daughter Margaret, "is St. Thomas of Canterbury's eve, and the Utas [octave-day] of St. Peter; and therefore to-morrow I long to go to God."

in the Archbishop's court must now have ended, for he enters, "Given to Mr. Chancellor Dr. Cox's servants to make merry, 4s. 8d. For writing the two acquittances and releases, 2s. Given to Mr. Dr. Cox's porter, 4d." His return home this time was on July the 11th, 1534.

After attending the Assizes at Oxford to carry on his suit against Ambrose Pope, he returned to Shirburn, and after the entry, "for laces for the maidens, 4d.," he quietly records: "*Memorandum.* Here I was committed to the Knight Marshal's ward at Woodstock," on the 29th of August, 1534. Vaughan, the groom of the King's chamber, came for him to Shirburn, and got 5s. for his fee. They started off by Watlington, and there they had to wait for the horses to be shod, which cost 18d. Then on to Woodstock, where he paid for his servants' dinner and for "horsemeat"—in another place he called it "horsebread"—16d. To appear before the authorities he had to change his riding dress, so he records, "Given for house room at Sygewyke's [Sedgwick's] to shift me in, 12d." He received orders to leave Woodstock, for his costs were 8s. "at Thame that Saturday at night," and 6s. 8d. he had to pay "to a man who was sent to fetch me again back to Woodstock and to Sir Thomas Wentworth's servant;" and so next comes a payment of 8d. this time "to Sygewyke's wife again for room at Woodstock," and then he is at Thame on Sunday at night, paying 9s.; and 16d. was "given to the priest to say Mass two days at my inn." It is curious to see that Mass was said

for Sir Adrian "at his inn," both at Woodstock and at Thame, for he was not two nights in any one place. Was the prisoner not allowed to hear Mass in the church? For prisoner he was, travelling in the custody of Richard Wentworth, the Knight Marshal's namesake and servant, as a gift to whom his wife here gave 20d. Lady Fortescue will have come to Thame to meet him, anxious to know the result of the examination to which he was subjected at Woodstock, and doubly anxious on account of the delay caused by his recall there after he had once left it. The payments at Thame are heavy because Lady Fortescue was there. The gift to the officer in charge of him is in perfect keeping with the ways of the time; and it was always most galling to have to pay pursuivants and King's messengers when they were most unwelcome.

On Monday night he was at Uxbridge, and from the double cost, 4s., it is plain that he paid his warder's expenses, as well as his own. On Tuesday, September the 1st, he went from Uxbridge to his lodging at Southwark by boat for 5d., and his "gear," that is his luggage, cost 1d. more than himself. That same day then, he was taken to the Marshalsea Prison, which was in Southwark. When he got there he had to send out for six-pennyworth of "trussing cord to truss his beds," and he bought ten faggots for 4d. and two lbs. of candles for 3d. His dinner was at his lodging on Wednesday, and it cost him 12d., and "a quart of wine on Wednesday at dinner, 2d." The quart of wine seems to have lasted him for



three days, if not four; for his next entry for his food is "wine on Saturday, at night, and pears and beer, 6d;" and then he laid in something of a stock, "wine on Sunday and pears, 16d.," and he gave the same sum to his man, Robin, who brought him venison and "a fardell," a parcel of provisions for his wants, sent by the good wife at home. "Thome," his other man, stayed with him all the time of his imprisonment,—Thomas Honychurch was his name; and another man, John Hawcliff, came from Shirburn through "Wykm" (Wycombe) to London, but on September the 13th he received his year's wages in full, "for he shall be shortly married," and he "went clearly from me on Wednesday, the 23rd," having been three weeks in the prison with his master. Sir Adrian paid the Knight Marshal 10s. a week for his own board, and 3s. 4d. a week for each of his men. On September the 10th he had Mr. Whitton to sup with him, his second boy's godfather, the old friend who had accompanied him ten years before, when he carried his wife's body to Bisham. That supper cost him 2s. 7d., and he spent 2s. "for wine and nuts on Sunday and Holy Rood day [Monday the 14th] in all, with part thereof given to Mr. Prior at my two suppers with him." This was probably Robert Strowddyll, Prior of the Dominicans, with whom he will have been intimate in consequence of the nearness of his house in London to the Convent of the Black Friars.<sup>1</sup> Prior

<sup>1</sup> Stow says that the Dominican Friars "sometime had their house in Olde-borne [Holborn], where they remained for the space of fifty-five years, and then in the year 1276 Gregory Rocksley,

Strowddyll, alas! had signed the repudiation of the Pope and the acknowledgment of the King's Supremacy on the 17th of the preceding April.

Lady Fortescue was at Woodstock "at St. Matthew's-tide in September," where the Court was, and Dolphin brought his master letters, we may well suppose that they were from her, on Michaelmas Day. They were followed by herself on Thursday, October the 1st, and 3rs. 9½d. were her "costs with four servants and three horses at London from Thursday afternoon to Monday in the morning, in all, besides her baiting at Colnbrook the 5th day of October." It was an awkward time for the heads of the family to be absent from home, for Stonor was now being given up. Mr. Richard Crispe wrote "the Inventory indented of the deliverance of Stonor Place," divers persons were paid "to help to truss stuff at Stonor," the cattle were driven and marked at removing, and carts were hired for 28s. to carry his stuff and goods from Stonor at Michaelmas, "besides gift carts and mine own two carts." Lady Fortescue saw to it, but she wanted to be with her husband in prison, and so no wonder that her baby was put out to nurse and her little Mary sent to the care of her mother, Lady Rede.

On October the 18th Sir Thomas Wentworth rode northward, the prisoner having been five weeks

mayor, and the Barons of this city, granted and gave to Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury, two lanes or ways next the street of Baynard's Castle and also the Tower of Mountfichet, to be destroyed; in place of which the said Robert builded the late new church of the Black Friars, and placed them therein." (*Survey of London*, 1603, p. 341.)

and two days in his custody. Accounts were settled between them and a new arrangement made. "Thenceforth I boarded myself and provided for all manner of necessities for myself, my wife, my servants, and for all other *in the house there*, at my charge, as it appeareth in the household book there, entered and written, at the desire and request of the same Sir Thomas, and so continued during the time of my being in his ward and custody." Lord Clermont understands this to mean that Sir Adrian went to live in his own house, but if that had been so, the whole entry was needless. "The house there" was evidently the Marshalsea, and "the household book there" that kept by the Under-Marshal. At the time of this change Sir Adrian gave Richard Wentworth "a lion and a collar" that cost 12d., and he contributed 8d. to Mrs. Under-Marshal to her servant's marriage offering. "Item, paid to Sir Thomas Wentworth's servants for going three times with me to my house, 12d."

His wife then came to live with him at the Marshalsea, and he bought "a low turned chair" for her. His servants, Richard Gregory and John Horsman had new tawny liveries that Michaelmas, and among many domestic entries, we have "a lye pot and two pictures of our Lady," and "a holy water stoup of pewter with the sprinkler," to give the place a Christian look. And there the sad year ran out. The kind-hearted old Knight "lent to Harry, Sir Thomas Darcy his servant, to be repaid by his master or by him, to help him out of the King's Bench, in ward for a fray in Southwark,

7s. 6d." And there are New Year's gifts. "A velvet bonnet for to give Mr. Marshall, 11s." and "a dozen gloves to give Mr. Marshall, 3s."—more probably, it would seem, Mrs. Under-Marshall was the recipient; and Mr. Mynton had 20d. and two young boys, 8d.—New Year's gifts, be it noted, not Christmas-boxes.

An entry respecting Lady Fortescue is significant. "For my wife's boat hire to Greenwich before Christmas, and three times in Christmas, and on Sunday after Christmas, 10s." From which we gather that the Court was at Greenwich that Christmas, and that Lady Fortescue went there again and again to intercede for her husband.

The account-book now comes to an end, and I hope that my readers are as sorry as I am. The last entry is "paid for the Acts of this last Parliament 7d.," and a very bad seven pennyworth they were. "The 3rd of November the Parliament began again," says Holinshed, "in the which was concluded the Act of Supremacy, which authorized the King's Highness to be Supreme Head of the Church of England, and the authority of the Pope abolished out of the realm." It would take a higher power than Parliament to do either the one or the other, and Sir Adrian Fortescue died for his faith in Him whose acts Parliament was not competent to repeal.

But the end was not quite yet. How long Sir Adrian continued in the custody of the Knight Marshal we do not know; but the last date mentioned in his accounts is Shrove Sunday, or the Sunday before Lent [February 7], 1535, when he

paid Richard Hall for "his costs home." He will probably have been no longer a prisoner on May the 4th, when Blessed Richard Reynolds, the three Carthusian priors, and John Haile were martyred at Tyburn, or on June the 19th, when three other Blessed Carthusian martyrs were executed, and again on June the 22nd and July the 6th, when Blessed John Fisher and Blessed Thomas More were beheaded. Whether he was a prisoner in London or a free man at home, he knew what these events foreboded.

The year 1536 came, and on January the 7th, Catherine of Arragon, the ill-used Queen of England, died. On May the 19th, Anne Boleyn was beheaded, and on the following day Henry married Jane Seymour.

Sir Adrian Fortescue possessed a Missal, which yet exists, in possession of Miss Fortescue Turville, to be regarded as the relic of a martyr. It is, of course, according to the Sarum rite, a book printed at Rouen in 1510. In it he entered his father's *obit*, and that of his first wife; and it bears the words, in his own handwriting, *Liber pertinet Adriano Fortescu militi*. This Missal serves to record Sir Adrian's opposition to the religious pretensions of King Henry VIII. It has inserted in it, "An order and form of bidding of beads by the King's commandment, anno 1536," the year after the deaths of our first Blessed Martyrs, the year of the deaths of Anne Boleyn and of her victim, Queen Catherine of Arragon, the year of Henry's marriage to Jane Seymour. Through the words that are printed here

in italics Sir Adrian Fortescue drew his pen, an act that was high treason by King Henry's laws.

"Ye shall pray for the whole congregation of Christ's Church, and especially for this Church of England.

"Wherein I first commend *to your devout prayers the King's most excellent Majesty, Supreme Head immediately under God of the spirituality and temporality of the same Church*, and the most noble and virtuous Lady, Queen Jane, his most lawful wife.

"Secondly, ye shall pray for the Clergy, and Lords temporal and Commons of this realm, beseeching Almighty God to give every one of them in his degree grace to use themselves in such wise as may be to His contentation, the King's honour, and the weal of the realm.

"Thirdly, ye shall pray for the souls that be departed, abiding the mercy of Almighty God, that it may please Him the rather at the contemplation of our prayers to grant them the fruition of His presence.

"God save the King."

All is now very nearly told. We have already seen that on the 14th of March, 1538, he bought for 29s. 6d. a marble tomb and another great laystone at the pulling down of Abingdon Abbey Church, and he left it with William Wykes, "dwelling in Abingdon, at the sign of the White Hart." Perhaps he meant it for his own tomb, but his body was to receive no honour from men.

DD

In February, 1539, he was arrested. On the 10th he wrote from London a letter to Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex,<sup>1</sup> begging him earnestly to relieve him of a charge of £100 due to the Crown by Lord Essex, for which he was being sued as one of the sureties, and he wrote on the same subject to Thomas Knyghton, Gent., dwelling at Bayford in Hertfordshire, signing it "with the hand of your old loving and acquainted friend, Adryan Fortescue, Kt." On the 27th of April, 1540, Cromwell was made Earl of Essex (the Earl just mentioned having been thrown by a horse and killed on March the 12th), and his Act of Attainder followed just two months after his elevation to the peerage. The attainder of Cromwell for heresy and treason was unanimously passed by Parliament on June the 19th, and he was beheaded on the 28th of July, 1540.

To return to 1539, and Sir Adrian Fortescue. It must have been on February the 14th that he was sent to the Tower, for a letter to Arthur Plantagenet Viscount Lisle, from a servant of his, named John Husee, dated the 17th,<sup>2</sup> says that "within these three days Sir Adrian Fortescue has been committed

<sup>1</sup> The Earl had long been on these terms with the Fortescues. "July 1, 1511, Henry Bouchier Earl of Essex and John Fortescue of Punsborne in the county of Hertford, Esquire [Sir Adrian's father], are bound by an obligation to pay £1,514 within two months." (Henry VIII. Accounts, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 21,480.) "Henry Earl of Essex to Cromwell. Sir Adrian Fortescue and others who are bound with him to the King in 100 marks, call extremely upon him to save them harmless." June 9, 1533. (*Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 611.)

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 231, places this letter in 1535.

to the Tower and shall lose his head." On the 18th an inventory was made of all his furniture, as well of his house at Brightwell, as of his "lodging beside the Black Friars in London." On June the 28th, that is between his attainder and his death, his plate was seized by the King, and it is entered by John Williams, Master and Treasurer of his Grace's jewels, in the list of plate received for his Majesty's use from divers and sundry surrendered monasteries. It consisted of two basons and two ewers parcel gilt, weighing 164 oz., and two pots parcel gilt, weighing 84 oz. The family must have succeeded in saving the greater part of Sir Adrian's plate and other property from confiscation.

Parliament met at Westminster on Monday, the 28th of April, 1539. The work that Henry and Cromwell, his Vicar-General in spiritualities, wanted of it was the suppression of the greater monasteries, and this work it performed. It was therefore the last Parliament in which the Abbots sat as Peers. In this Parliament an entirely new proceeding was introduced, by which sentence of death might be passed, without any trial of the person accused, without evidence or any defence.

This Parliament, which suppressed the religious houses and passed the Six Articles, the most servile Parliament that ever sat in England, adopted at Cromwell's bidding the device by which Cromwell himself just a year later was condemned unheard. Margaret, Countess of Salisbury first cousin to the King's mother, her son Reginald Cardinal Pole, styled "one Reginald Pole, late Dean of Exeter,"



Gertrude<sup>1</sup> the widow of the recently executed Marquess of Exeter, Sir Adrian Fortescue and Sir Thomas Dingley, were with some others attainted of high treason without trial.

On the Parliamentary Roll is the attainder of Adrian Fortescue, of Brightwell, Oxon, for sedition,<sup>2</sup> and that of Sir Thomas Dingley, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, with Robert Granceter, merchant, for going to several foreign princes and persuading them to make war with the King. Sir Adrian and Hugh Vaughan of Bekener, who is mentioned on the Roll with the Countess of Salisbury, were condemned as "confederates of the above." The "above," besides those mentioned, include Nicholas Throgmorton, John Helyard, clerk, Thomas Goldwell, clerk,<sup>3</sup> William Peto, of West Greenwich, Observant, who have not only "adhered themselves to the Bishop of Rome," but "have taken and perceived worldly promotions of the gift of the same Bishop of Rome," which was true certainly of Cardinal Pole, "and also stirred up the people against the King," which was true of none of them. The Bill of Attainder was brought in and read twice on May the 10th, and the third time on the day following.

<sup>1</sup> Her attainder was reversed in Mary's first Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> *The Parliamentary History of England*, London, 1751, vol. iii. p. 141. Cobbett, in his edition of this book, has omitted all mention of Sir Adrian's attainder, but he relates it in his *State Trials*.

<sup>3</sup> I am not aware that it has ever been noticed that Thomas Goldwell, afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph, was attainted in his absence at this time. I can find no record of the reversal of that attainder by Parliament in Queen Mary's reign. Dr. Hilliard was an orthodox priest of some note, then in exile.

The clause of the Act relating to Fortescue states that he had "not only most traitorously refused his duty of allegiance, which he ought to bear to your Highness, but also hath committed divers and sundry detestable and abominable treasons, and put sedition in your realm."<sup>1</sup> The precise acts, which were called treasons, do not seem to be distinctly specified. The tyranny of Henry was becoming more and more capricious, and life could be taken without any reason being alleged. In this case there would seem to have been no proceedings, no pleadings, not even definite accusations. We can only ascertain the crime imputed to our martyr by a consideration of the company in which he was condemned, and from the traditions concerning him. A similar argument may be deduced from the names and professions of his companions in death.

"The 8th of July," says John Stow, "Griffith Clark, Vicar of Wandsworth, with his chaplain and his servant, and Friar Waire, were all four hanged and quartered at St. Thomas Waterings. The 10th of July Sir Adrian Fortescue and Thomas Dingley were beheaded." The Grey Friars Chronicle says that, on "July the 9th was beheaded at Tower Hill Master Foskew and Master Dyngle, Knights; and that same day was drawn to Tyburn two of their servants, and there hanged and quartered for treason." Charles Wriothsley, Windsor Herald, in his Chronicle, also gives the day as July the 9th,

<sup>1</sup> *Roll of Parliament*, Henry VIII. 147, m, 15, quoted in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

and he too makes mention of the execution for treason of the two serving-men. The Knights of St. John give July the 8th as the day of the martyrdom, but Sander gives the same date as Stow.

That the two Knights should have died by beheading instead of the frightful death with which English law punished high treason, can have been only by the King's having extended to them the "mercy" that he had shown to Sir Thomas More; which had caused Blessed Thomas to answer, "God forbid that the King should use any more such mercy unto any of my friends, and God bless all my posterity from such pardons." However, it was a real mercy to be spared the horrors of Tyburn, though there was cruelty enough remaining in any form of death undeserved.

The Knights of his Order have always held Sir Adrian to be a martyr, and as such they have honoured him. There are three pictures of him in the island of Malta, two of them in the Church of St. John's at Valetta, amongst the *Beati*, with the emblem of martyrdom, the palm; the third in the Collegio di S. Paolo, at Rabato, with the proper glory of a *Beato*. In a picture that existed at Madrid in 1621, of which an official description exists in Malta, he was drawn with a knife in his throat, and the inscription called him Blessed. This portrait was in the Church of the College of St. George in that city, and the Rabato picture is believed to be drawn from it. Two English priests, William Numan and Edward Messendin, the Agent of Douay College at Madrid (his true name was

Madison),<sup>1</sup> who were present when a Public Notary described the picture, declared that the history of the aforesaid Knight and Martyr was related by Sander in the seventh book of his *De Visibili Monarchia*. A careful search in the book referred to, does not verify their assertion. When Nicholas Fortescue, in 1639, made application to Grand Master Lascaris to be received into the Order with the view of resuscitating the English *langue*, he supported his petition by invoking "the memorials that are read in the chronicles, and the holiness of Blessed Adrian Fortescue, Knight of the Order, who is numbered amongst the Saints that are revered in the Oratory of the great Church of St. John."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the Missal that Sir Adrian has left behind him, we have already spoken of the other very interesting relic, which is now in the Bodleian library—the volume on the fly-leaf of which is the record of his second son's birth and baptism. The whole book is in Sir Adrian's handwriting, as he himself notes in it twice over, with the date, 1532. This was the year of his second marriage, and his wife has written her name on it, together with the name of her second husband, "Parry," showing that she retained possession of it after his execution. It passed into the hands of Sir Kenelm Digby, whose name is also written upon it.

Sir Adrian has written these interesting words on the first page :

<sup>1</sup> *Douay Diary*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> It is the existence of these pictures at Malta, that, as we have already stated, has secured our martyr's beatification.

JESUS. JESUS.

Iste liber pertinet Adriano Fortescu militi, sua manu  
propria scriptus anno Dni. 1532, et anno R[egni]  
R[egis] Henr. VIII. xxiiij<sup>to</sup>.

Loyall Pensee.

Injuriarum remedium—Oblivio.

Omnium rerum vicissitudo.

Garde les portes de ta bouche,  
Pour fouyr peryl et reproche.

The volume consists of the treatise *On Absolute and Limited Monarchy*, by his great-uncle, Chancellor Fortescue, preceded by a large part of the old poem of *Piers Plowman*, and at the end there is an ample collection of proverbs, from which we here make a selection.

A king sekant [seeking] treason shall find it in his land.  
When the fault is in the head, the member is oft sick.  
Many [a] one glosses the law, oft against the poor.  
He, that ruleth well his tongue, is held for wise.  
Money gotten at the dice [en]richeth not the heir.  
A woman, if she be fair, may hap to be good.  
It is easy to cry Yule<sup>1</sup> at another man's cost.  
He shall hunger in frost that in heat will not work.  
Eat and drink by measure, and defy thy leech.  
Men of muckle speech must sometimes lie.  
A man may be of good kin, and himself little worth.  
Thou must trow [trust] some man, or have an ill life.  
He that toucheth pitch and tar cannot long be clean.  
A wound when it is green is best to be healed.  
Unkindness by-past would be forgot.  
For little more or less make no debate.

<sup>1</sup> "In Yorkshire and our other northern parts, they have an old custom after sermon or service on Christmas Day, the people will, even in the churches, cry *Ule, ule*, as a token of rejoicing." (Blount, quoted by Halliwell.)

He that covets all is able all to tyne [lose].  
About thine and mine riseth muckle strife.  
He hath a blessed life that holds him content.  
He that wots [knows] when he is full, is no fool.  
Put many to school, all will not be clerks.

There is not so little a flea but sometime he will nye  
[annoy].

At every dog that barks one ought not to be annoyed.  
He that is well loved, he is not poor.  
A good tale, ill told, is spoilt in the telling.  
He that wots when to leap will sometimes look aback.  
Wherefore serves the lock, and the thief in the house?  
It makes a wanton mouse, an unhardy cat.  
A swine that is over fat is cause of his own death.

A few of the proverbs are religious, and we have  
kept them for the last.

Obeys well the good Kirk and thou shalt fare the better.  
Think ay thou shalt die, thou shalt not gladly sin.  
Be blythe at thy meat, devout at thy Mass.<sup>1</sup>  
He that dreads not God shall not fail to fall.

In Husbands Bosworth Hall, the residence of  
Miss Fortescue-Turville, the last direct descendant  
of the blessed martyr, was found some years ago  
a very precious relic, being nothing less than the  
Book of Hours which he habitually used.

The manuscript has suffered a good deal from  
time and careless handling, but on the outer leaf  
can still be read another series of maxims, a kind of  
rule of life written and signed by the martyr's own  
hand. We give a full transcript of this autograph.  
It will be seen how, while yet in the days of his  
prosperity, this truly Christian knight was pre-

<sup>1</sup> This reminds us of the grand old Catholic proverb: Meat and  
Mass hinder no man.

paring all unconsciously for the martyr's crown and palm.

The Book of Hours is now reverently preserved as a relic in the beautiful little Catholic church adjoining the old hall of Husbands Bosworth.

Above all things love God with thy heart.

Desire His honour more than the health of thine own soul.

Take heed with all diligence to purge and cleanse thy mind with oft confession, and raise thy desire or lust from earthly things.

Be you houseled<sup>1</sup> with entire devotion.

Repute not thyself better than any other persons, be they never so great sinners, but rather judge and esteem yourself most simplest.

Judge the best.

Use much silence, but when thou hast necessary cause to speak.

Delight not in familiarity of persons unknown to thee.

Be solitary, as much as is convenient for thine estate.

Banish from thee all grudging and detraction, and especially from thy tongue.

And pray often.

Also enforce thee to set thy house at quietness.

Resort to God every hour.

Avaunce not thy words or deeds by any pride.

Be not too much familiar with thy servants, but [show] to them a sad [serious] and prudent countenance with gentleness.

Show before all people good example of virtues.

Use to rebuke charitably the light and wanton people.

Comfort all persons in well-doing.

Love cleanliness in thy house and in especial to young persons.

Show thyself a sore enemy to vice, and sharply reproving all vile and reprobrious words and deeds that be not honest.

<sup>1</sup> Housel, *i.e.*, Holy Communion.

Be not partial for favour, lucre, nor malice, but according to troth, equity, justice and reason.

Be pitiful unto poor folk and help them to thy power, for there you shall greatly please God.

Give fair language to all persons and especiall[y] to the poor and needy.

Also be sesy [*sic*] and diligent in giving of alms.

In prosperity be meek of heart and in adversity patient.

And pray continually to God that you may do that that is His pleasure.

Also apply diligently the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, whatsoever thou have therein to do.

Pray for perseverance.

Continue in dread and ever have God afore thine eye.

Renew every day thy good purpose.

What thou hast to do, do it diligently.

Stab[lish] thyself alway in well-doing.

If by chance you fall into sin, despair not, and if you keep these precepts, the Holy Ghost will strengthen thee in all other things necessary, and this doing you shall [be] with Christ in Heaven, to whom be given laud, praise and honour everlasting.

ADRYAN FORTESCUE.

Lady Fortescue, the martyr's widow, was held in high favour by Queen Mary. She attended the Queen as she went in state on the 30th of September, 1553, from the Tower to her palace at Westminster, and she is the first named of ten ladies "who rode in crimson velvet, their horses trapped with the same." Sir Adrian's daughter Margaret, Lady Wentworth, had a place in the same procession. In the fifth year of Queen Mary's reign, several manors in Gloucestershire were granted by the Crown to "Anne Fortescue, widow of Sir Adrian Fortescue, and to the heirs male of Sir Adrian." It is singular that she should be called



in the grants by the name of Fortescue, for she was already married to Sir Thomas Ap-harry, or Parry. Her second husband was a Protestant, and was sworn of the Privy Council by Queen Elizabeth at the first Council held after her accession. He had been "a servant much about her" as Princess Elizabeth, and she at once made him Comptroller of her Household.

Sir Adrian's "little son John" was a boy of eight at the time of his father's death, born in the same year as Queen Elizabeth. He was brought up a Protestant, and his father's attainder was reversed in 1552 in his favour in the reign of Edward VI. He was soon after chosen to be preceptor to the Princess Elizabeth, and when she became Queen she made him Keeper of the Great Wardrobe. In 1591 he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer,<sup>1</sup> and when he died in 1607, having outlived Elizabeth, he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He acquired the manor of Salden, Bucks, from his step-father, Sir Thomas Parry, and he was the founder of the Salden branch of the Fortescue family, which became extinct in the male line in 1729, but in the female line is now represented by the Turvilles and the Amhersts.

It must have seemed that the main line of the Fortescues of Salden was irretrievably lost to the Church. Sir Francis, son and heir of Sir John,

<sup>1</sup> Father Tesimond (Greenway) has confused him with his nephew, John Fortescue, son of Sir Antony, Blessed Adrian's third son. He was a Catholic. (*Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, First Series, p. 174.)

was made a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of James I. But yet, during his father's lifetime Francis is described by Father John Gerard<sup>1</sup> as "a Catholic by conviction, but conforming externally to the State religion for fear of offending his father." His wife, Grace Manners, Father Gerard converted, but though her husband, Sir Francis, "made no difficulty of receiving priests, and at last went so far as to be fond of dressing the altar with his own hands and of saying the breviary, yet with all this he remains outside the ark," wrote Father Gerard in 1609, "for he presumes too much on an opportunity of doing penance before death." Father Anthony Hoskins was their first resident priest, and Salden continued to be a Jesuit mission even after it had ceased to belong to the Fortescues. It is very singular that no trace of the fact that this branch of the family was Catholic should have reached Lord Clermont when he was compiling his admirable and most painstaking family history. Adrian Fortescue, the great-grandson of our martyr, was a Jesuit, and Sir Francis, the fourth baronet, in whom the male line expired, was at one time a Novice in the Society.

J. M.

**AUTHORITIES.**—Thomas Fortescue, Lord Clermont, *A History of the Family of Fortescue in all its Branches*, 1880, pp. 255 to 311. An article by G. K. Fortescue in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xx. p. 36.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Father John Gerard*, p. 335.

### XIII.

**THE BLESSED THOMAS ABEL, THE  
BLESSED EDWARD POWELL, AND THE  
BLESSED RICHARD FETHERSTON,**  
*SECULAR PRIESTS.*

*Smithfield, 30 July, 1540.*

THE Blessed Thomas Abel, or Able, or Abell (the martyr himself used the last spelling), was educated at the University of Oxford, but we are not informed of what College or Hall he was a member. He took the degree of Master of Arts in the year 1516, and afterwards proceeded in Theology and became a Doctor in that faculty. Besides being a learned man, he had acquired many accomplishments, was acquainted with modern languages, and had a knowledge of music.<sup>1</sup>

When the cause of the divorce was introduced, Abel devoted his learning and his labours to the Queen's defence, and was one of her advocates in conjunction with the other two martyrs, who some years

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier says that he was the Queen's instructor in playing musical instruments and also in languages. (*Historia Ecclesiastica de Martyrio Fratrum Ord. Minorum in Anglia, &c.*, Ingolstadt, 1583, fol. 42.)

later suffered in company with him, though what precise part they took in the pleadings does not seem to be on record. In January, 1529, he was sent by the Queen into Spain on a mission of peculiar trust. Henry VIII. had discovered that Pope Julius II. had in the original Brief for his marriage granted the dispensation in a more ample form than his advisers at first supposed. His plans for obtaining the divorce had therefore to be changed, and he endeavoured to gain possession of the original parchment, which was preserved in Spain. He therefore forced Catherine to write and ask for it, and to say that no copy would be accepted in lieu of it. Abel was commissioned to take this letter to Spain, which he did. In delivering it, however, he let the Emperor know that the delivery of the Brief would rather injure than advance Catherine's cause, and so the Emperor declined to comply with her request. This refusal seems to have been given at Saragossa on the 19th of April, 1529.<sup>1</sup> After his return, Catherine, in the year 1530 presented him to the parochial benefice of Bradwell, in Essex.

On the 21st of April, 1532, Abel appealed to the Holy See, not publicly, however, but through Dr. Ortiz, an Imperial agent residing at Rome, for protection against the vindictiveness of King Henry. A draft brief appointing Abel an apostolic preacher was therefore prepared, but eventually the Pope for prudential reasons thought it better not to expedite it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. iv. n. 5132; vi. n. 265(8).

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. v. nn. 1242, 1325.

About the same time our martyr wrote a book on the divorce, the title of which tells its own tale. It runs, *Invicta Veritas, An answer to the determinations of the most famous Universities, that by no manner of law it may be lawful for King Henry to be divorced from the Queen's grace, his lawful and very wife.*<sup>1</sup> The King was very angry at this. Abel was thrown into the Tower, and the book was sent to Oxford to be censured, but Chapuys says in August that the University could find nothing to condemn,<sup>2</sup> and that the King was buying up the book in order to destroy it.

Before the middle of October there was a fresh trouble. Laurence Cook, once Prior of the Carmelites at Doncaster, and Abel said Mass before the Lieutenant of the Tower. Into this an inquiry was held, and the two confessors were separated.<sup>3</sup>

On Christmas Eve Abel was set free, on condition that he should not write again nor preach till a fortnight after Easter. He returned to live with the Queen his mistress, but half a year later his troubles began again. The Government wished to force Catherine to drop her title of Queen, but she refused to do so, and in July two warrants were found, in which she seems to have made a quasi-official use of that title. Search was made in

<sup>1</sup> The alleged place of printing is "Luneberge," but it is believed to have been issued from some secret press in London. The date, May, 1532, of the colophon, may also be a blind. There are copies of this very rare work at the British Museum and in the Lambeth Library.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. v. n. 1256.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* nn. 1432, 1458.

London for Abel, who was supposed to know who had drawn them up. But so far as we can see, he was hidden by the Queen successfully.<sup>1</sup>

But Henry would not allow the least liberty to those who would not submit to him unconditionally. Catherine's household was broken up, and as it was suspected that Abel had encouraged her servants to refuse to be sworn to her as Princess only (after having been already sworn to her as Queen), he and his fellow-chaplain Barker were consigned to the porter's ward, on the 19th of December, 1533, and sent to the Tower again, says Chapuys, before December the 27th, just a year after his liberation. Perhaps his restraint was at first less severe, but on the 24th of February, 1534, he was definitely committed to the Beauchamp Tower.<sup>2</sup>

The cause of this increase of severity was in all probability the attempt to implicate him in the so-called treasons of the Maid of Kent. Almost all his biographers have assumed that he did to some extent encourage that ill-advised woman. But now that the extant official papers have been published, it becomes clear that nothing of the sort was proved or even charged against him. The only fact alleged against him is that he was told by the Franciscan friar Hugh Riche<sup>3</sup> of the nun's widely-known prophecy, that Henry should not be King a month

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 842.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vi. nn. 1541, 1571; viii. n. 1001.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 1468. It appears that there was also once a paper headed, *Confessions of Dr. Abell*. But this was probably later, and would seem, from the circumstances under which it is mentioned in Cromwell's *Remembrances*, to have referred to the

after marrying Anne Boleyn. The accusation contained in the act of attainder declares that it was this prophecy which inspired him first to write his book (or rather "divers books"), then to urge Catherine to maintain her title in the warrants above-mentioned, and finally also to excite her servants to refuse the new oath to her as Princess only. The facts have been recited above, in most cases from letters written in a hostile spirit, which however abundantly suffice to show the ridiculous nature of the charges, when logically considered. The precise terms of the accusation and of the sentence passed on Abel as though he were guilty of misprision of treason, are the following (after reciting the charges against Blessed John Fisher and others).

"One, Thomas Abell, clerk, being of the confederacy aforesaid, and taking such firm and constant credit to the said false and feigned revelations and miracles of the said Nun, not only caused to be printed and set forth in this realm divers books against the said divorce and separation, to the disclander of our said Sovereign Lord, but also animated the said Lady Catherine obstinately to persist in her wilful opinion against the same divorce and separation, and after the said divorce lawfully had, to usurp and take upon her still to be Queen: and procured divers writings to be made by her by the name of Queen; and also procured

attempts made to throw the responsibility for his book on Fisher. (*Ibid.* vii. n. 923 (xxi.), viii. n. 859, pp. 333, 336.) It may also be Abel's defence against the accusations contained in his bill of attainder. He alludes to this paper later on.

and abetted the servants of the said Lady Catherine against the King's express commandment and proclamation to name, call and accept and repute the said Lady Catherine for Queen of the realm, to the intent to make a common division and rebellion in this realm to the great peril and danger of the said Sovereign Lord.

"Be it therefore enacted . . . that Thomas Abell [and others] shall be convict and attainted of misprision and concealment of treason, as a person that hath given such credit, counsel, and constant belief to the said principal offenders, whereby they have taken courage and boldness to commit their said detestable treasons and offences. And that [he and the rest] for their said several offences by them committed shall suffer imprisonment of their bodies at the King's will, and lose and forfeit to the King's Highness all their goods, chattels, and debts, . . . and that such benefices and spiritual promotions, as the said . . . Thomas Abell had, on the 16th day of January, shall from the 20th day of March, the year of our Lord MDXXXIV. (*i.e.*, 1534), be void in the law, as if the said . . . Thomas Abell were dead of [his] natural death."<sup>1</sup>

In the Beauchamp Tower, like many other victims, of whom not a few were Confessors of the Faith, Abel has left a memorial of his weary sojourn, which remains to the present day. We can hardly be mistaken in supposing that the figure of a bell carved on the wall, with the letter

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes of the Realm* (1810), vol. iii. p. 450 (25 Henry VIII. c. 12, § 3).



“A” in front and the word “Thomas” above, is the rebus of the Blessed Thomas Abel.

It was apparently at this time that Blessed Thomas Abel addressed the following letter to his fellow-prisoner, Blessed John Forest,<sup>1</sup> who was also a prisoner in London at this time, as has been seen, though we do not know where he was confined. Almost every sentence in the martyr's letter and in Forest's answer contains allusions to or quotations from the Latin Vulgate, which shows that both writers were so familiar with the Holy Scripture that they habitually thought and expressed themselves in its language. The difficulty of translation into modern English, however, is not inconsiderable.

“Very Reverend Father,

“Although our senses shrink from the intensity of tortures, yet our faith demands and requires us to bear them. I said, ‘My foot is moved because Thou hast turned away Thy face from me.’ But wherefore this delay to one who eagerly longs for that supreme blessedness? O Blessed Face in which is the fulness of joy! Whence David says: ‘I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.’ But ‘Thou turned'st away Thy face from me, and I became troubled;’ troubled, I say, because the pain of the tortures is prolonged; it is prolonged, and at the same time I am humbled; humbled and not raised up, because not drawn to my Saviour; not drawn, because I am burdened with the weight of my sins; burdened and not refreshed by Him.

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *op. cit.* fol. 42—45.

What then profits my condemnation if there be longer to wait? 'With expectation I have waited for the Lord,' and He has not heard me. Wherefore, I ask? Because you have not implored the mercy of God with such a multitude of prayers as would have availed me. For I know of how much weight is the prayer of the just man before God. 'Because with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption.' 'Thou hast delivered them,' and that for the sake of David, Thy servant. Why then is not an end put to these tortures (*pænis*)? I have borne [them] now for seven-and-thirty days and I find no rest.<sup>1</sup> But my hope is that we shall die together and by the same punishment. Let us die, I pray, that we may live with Him, to whom, Martyr of all Martyrs, I commend you earnestly in my prayers. Farewell, and pray for me."

Blessed John Forest replied to this touching letter as follows:

"Most noble Sir,

"What is true of the brightness of [beatific] cognition, is also true of the fruition of [celestial] joy and of eternal habitation; hence the Blessed Augustine in the book *De Civitate Dei*, 'There are many mansions in the one house, and

<sup>1</sup> *Per triginta septem jam dies sustineo et non invenio requiem.* If this means that he had then been thirty-seven days in the Beauchamp Tower, the date of writing will be March 31, 1534. This is very possibly the right date.

there will also be rewards of various dignities, yet God is there all in all.' There will also be joy in the degrees of brightness, so the joy which each shall have will be common to all, for even the glory of the head shall be [the glory] of all through the bond of charity. And thus everyone will rejoice over the good of others as if it was his own.

"Do not, my son, count your pains (*pænas*), for this is to add grief to grief. But think on that which Saint Paul saith, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.' To which words we may well add the saying of the prophet, 'A thousand years in Thy sight shall be as yesterday.' If you bear with patience the torments inflicted on you, do not doubt of the reward, of which the Psalmist says, 'I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, for the reward.' O blessed and thrice happy is that reward which is given to those who fear God! We should pray therefore, 'Reward Thy servant,' yet only because, 'I have kept Thy words.' If, therefore, there is a reward for keeping the words of the Lord, keep them, my son. But you will ask, 'How long?' To the end. For our Saviour says, 'He that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.' Therefore, neither the tortures (*pænæ*) of thirty-seven days, nor of a thousand years, but the last end will crown your work. With labourers the work of a single day does not satisfy for a whole year; nor do those who are hired to go to the city of Rome receive as much as those

who are sent to Jerusalem. If you take such care to run to Rome, think you not of going on to Jerusalem? Jerusalem, I say, 'which is the City of the great King.' In her houses you will know when you attain to her. To her, I say, in whom is the highest peace and the greatest tranquillity. Think you, my son, that we shall run together and rejoice in the same punishment, and drink of the same chalice? A greater combat awaits me, but for you lighter sufferings remain. Whatever they be, act manfully, our Lord supporting you. Farewell."

The severity of the sentence passed against Abel and his companions attracted the notice of foreigners then resident in this country, though probably dread of the King's violence prevented all remonstrance on the part of their fellow-countrymen.

Chapuys, the Emperor's Ambassador, in a letter to Charles V., dated the 5th of May, 1535, says that it is reported that Fisher and More, and "a doctor who was lately his confessor [Dr. Wilson], a chaplain of the Queen [Abel] and the schoolmaster of the Princess [*i.e.*, Fetherston] have been summoned to swear to the statutes made here against the Pope, the Queen and Princess, otherwise they would be treated no better than the said monks [*i.e.*, the Carthusians and their companions], six weeks being given to them to consider the matter. They have replied that they were ready to suffer what martyrdom pleased the King, and that they would not change their opinion in six weeks, or even in six hundred years if they lived so long; and

many fear that they will be despatched like the aforesaid."<sup>1</sup>

Chapuy was substantially right as regards Fisher and More, and we can well believe that he was no less well informed regarding our martyr and his companions. On the 17th of February of the next year, 1536, he wrote to Granvelle: "Three doctors have been two years in the Tower, condemned by Parliament to perpetual prison for maintaining the marriage. . . . It is said, they are to be put to death; one is the King's Confessor [Wilson], another the Princess' preceptor [Fetherston], the third is Abel, whom you saw at Saragossa."<sup>2</sup>

Again, a little later, Ortiz wrote to the Empress, on the 20th of April, 1536, "It is thought that they will soon martyr Master Abel and another chaplain to the late Queen."<sup>3</sup> On August the 17th the same correspondent added that Abel "had no prospect of being liberated."

There is extant for the year 1537 a return of the prisoners in the Tower, with a note of the duration of their incarceration, and of the fees paid for their maintenance. From this we learn that Abel had been in prison for two years and four months (*i.e.*, sixteen weeks) at the rate of forty pence per month. For Fetherston the same rate is charged, and for the space of two years and two months. Doctors Wilson and Powell were to be paid for at the slightly increased rate of 5s. per month.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 666.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* x. n. 308.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* x. n. 698; xi. n. 320.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* viii. n. 1001, xii. (2) n. 181.

The sad years wore heavily on for the poor prisoner, who at last appealed to Cromwell for some mitigation of his lot. His letter is extant, and runs as follows :

“ My Lord, I beseech our Saviour Jesus Christ to give your Lordship after this life, life everlasting in Heaven, Amen. I humbly beseech your Lordship that it will please you to be so good Lord unto me, as to move the King's grace to give me license to go to church and say Mass here within the Tower, and for to lie in some house upon the Green. I have been in close prison this three years and a quarter come Easter,<sup>1</sup> and your Lordship knoweth very well that there was never man in this realm that ever was so unjustly condemned as I am. For I was never since I came hither asked nor examined of any offence that should be laid unto my charge. Also Master Barker my fellow was commanded hither with me, and both of us for one thing and deed ; and he was examined and delivered, and I was never spoken to, and yet condemned and lie here still in close prison—and all that was put in my condemnation is untrue, as I have written unto your Lordship largely once before this time. And I judge and suppose in your Lordship so much natural pity and so much charitable compassion, that your Lordship would of your own mere goodness have moved and besought the King's grace to have been so gracious Lord unto me, as to have granted me the liberty which I now desire, though I

<sup>1</sup> This letter was therefore written before Easter, 1537.

had been culpable, after so long time of punishment and being in prison as I have been. Wherefore I do not doubt but rather trust that your Lordship will so do now for me, seeing that your Lordship doth know that I am innocent and have so great wrong. And therefore I do not rehearse and write of the divers diseases that I have, nor of the great misery, need and poverty that I am in, nor how that increaseth and waxeth more and more daily; but all that, and this little petition of going to church and lying out of close prison I commit wholly unto your Lordship's great goodness. The which I humbly beseech your Lordship to move the King's grace to grant me, and in so doing your Lordship shall bind me to beseech Almighty God to give you grace, that your Lordship may evermore here live, and laud and honour Him according to your promise and profession; and that you may have after that the sight and fruition of His most holy and glorious Godhead. Amen.

"By your daily bedeman, Thomas Abell, priest."<sup>1</sup>

What resulted from this appeal we do not know. Probably nothing. The years 1538, 1539 have left no record of Abel behind them. Then it would seem that his keepers, thinking perhaps that he was forgotten by the Government, allowed him to beg, and for this reason let him out on bail without having Cromwell's license so to do, a piece of humanity for which all concerned paid dearly.

<sup>1</sup> R.O. State Papers, Henry VIII. xii. 542. Autograph, on a half sheet of paper.

The brutality of Cromwell's *régime* was never more violent and unreasoning than just before his fall. The group of martyrs who suffered in 1540 and 1541 were to such an extent the victims of what seems like mere whim and senseless tyranny, that it is really difficult to find any reason, why they should have been picked out to suffer then rather than at any other time, or why they were chosen, and others passed over. Official papers do not attempt to give explanations, or excuses of any sort. The end which now overtook Blessed Thomas Abel and his companions was in some ways more sudden, cruel and inexplicable than that which befell any other of our martyrs.

His keeper was sent to the Marshalsea for having allowed him and Dr. Powell to go out on bail.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Wilson and Dr. Sampson, Bishop of Chichester, were thrown into the Tower on May the 29th, for having sent relief to the prisoners. Abel and his companions were condemned without trial by Parliament. Before we turn to their act of attainder a word must be said about Wilson and Sampson. Sampson, Bishop of Chichester, was a supporter of the King's usurpations, but was thrown into prison, as a Protestant letter-writer says, "for sending an alms to the Papist Abel, then brought down to the lowest misery through his long detention

<sup>1</sup> Stow says it was the keeper of Newgate (Edit. Howes, 1631, p. 580), while Cromwell's *Remembrances* mention, "Abel in the King's Bench." (*Letters and Papers*, vol. xv. n. 598.) From this it would seem that the martyrs had been moved from the Tower, but where they were is not yet certain.



in a most filthy prison, and as the Papists here say, almost eaten-up by worms—*vermibus fere necatus*.”<sup>1</sup>

As for Dr. Wilson, he at first bravely confessed the Faith, and withstood the terrors of the Tower for more than three years. Then he had taken the oath and had received a royal pardon, and had endeavoured (he says) to pervert the confessors at whose side he had once stood bravely. After Cromwell's death he was again pardoned, but before this he had written Cromwell a cringeing letter craving forgiveness, two paragraphs of which may be quoted, to show how abject even bold souls had become at that period of universal defection.

“My Lord, . . . And where I have offended in procuring and giving Powell, Fetherston, and Abell relief in such sort as I did, for although, as God is my judge, I intended but their relief till the King's highness should some way dispose of them, and no maintenance of their evil opinion, but wished their amendment and conformity; and also thought that I might help them without offence of my duty to the King's Majesty. Yet my duty had been, seeing their condition, both to have asked license to relieve them, and also to have been more diligent than I was to have instructed them and brought them from their evil opinion to conformity. And therefore I do lowly acknowledge this mine offence, and ask mercy therefore. And further I do acknowledge that in my doing (as I have confessed) while I was in prison,

<sup>1</sup> Hilles to Bullinger (*Epistola Tigurina*), Parker Society, *Original Letters*, i. p. 211.

I have offended and simply abused myself contrary to my duty unto the King's Majesty. . . .

I spoke to the Bishop of Chichester [Sampson] for Doctor Powell, that he would be a suitor for him to have some ease of his imprisonment, and this, as I remember, I showed to your Lordship. But truly my suit was to none other intent, but that he might be saved and won to conformity. With which Powell I spoke once and moved him thereto, as I have confessed. And where your Lordship said it was confessed that I had at one other time spoke with him, I cannot tell what to say thereon, for in good faith I cannot till this day remember by any act, that I should do with him; or by any other means, when that should be, or in what manner. For if I could, as God help me, I would with good-will confess it, and would indeed so do whensoever I can remember it. And sure I am, that if I were with him, I neither meant any malice or maintenance of his evil opinion thereby."<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the martyr's attainder.

*"The attainder of Fetherstone, Abell, Powell, Horne, [Cooke and Tyrrell.]*

"Item, quædam alia petitio, formam cujusdam actus attincturæ in se continens, exhibita est suæ Regiæ Majestati in Parlamento prædicto cujus tenor sequitur in hæc verba—In most humblewise showing to your most royal Majesty, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and other your most loving and obedient subjects the Commons in this your most high Court

<sup>1</sup> R.O. State Papers, Henry VIII. xv. 747. Autograph.

of Parliament assembled:—That where Richard Fetherstone late of London Clerk, Thomas Abell late of London Clerk, Edward Powell late of New Salisbury in your county of Wilts Clerk, and William Horne late of London yeoman, by the instigation of the devil, putting apart the dread of God and the excellent benefits received of your Highness, have not only most traitorously refused their duties of allegiance, which they ought to bear to your Highness, but also have most traitorously adhered themselves unto the bishop of Rome, being a common enemy unto your Majesty and this your Realm, refusing your Highness to be our and their Supreme Head of this your Realm of England, And also have committed, perpetrated and done divers and sundry other detestable and abominable treasons to the most fearful peril and danger of the destruction of your most royal person to the utter loss, disherison and desolation of this your Realm.

[Here follows one paragraph accusing Margaret Tyrrell, wife of William Tyrrell of the county of Essex, for refusing allegiance to Prince Edward, and another accusing Laurence Cooke, late of Doncaster, of having adhered to Robert Aske.]<sup>1</sup>

“It may therefore please your Highness that it may be enacted by the authority of this present Parliament that the said Richard Fetherston, Thomas Abell, Edward Powell, William Horne,

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Tyrrell does not seem to have suffered death. Cooke, once a Carmelite, had long striven boldly for the Faith. He suffered with Horne on August the 9th following. His name is included in the cause of the so-called *Prætermissi*.

Laurence Cook, and Margaret Tyrrell, and every of them, for their abominable and detestable treasons by them and every of them most abominably and traitorously committed and done against your Majesty and this your Realm shall be by authority of this present Parliament convicted and attainted of High Treason. And that the said Richard Fetherston, Thomas Abell, Edward Powell, William Horne, and Margaret Tyrrell and every of them shall lose and forfeit to your Highness and to your heirs and successors all such their manors, lordships, meases, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, remainders, possessions, rights, conditions, and all other hereditaments of what names, natures, or qualities soever they be. . . . Cui quidem petitioni perlectæ et intellectæ per dictum Dominum Regem ex auctoritate et assensu parliamenti prædicti, Sic responsum est,—*Soit faict comme il est désiré.*"<sup>1</sup>

The King's sanction to the act, which was given then, as now, in the French formula with which the record closes, bears date the 24th of July, 1540, and the day appointed for their martyrdom was the 30th of July, 1540. To show the impartiality of the Tudor tyranny towards all who did not bow before it, it was ordered that they should suffer at the same time and place with three Zwinglian heretics, and they were dragged to Smithfield, a Catholic and a Zwinglian bound on the same hurdle.

Then the sentence was carried out to the letter. The heretics were burned at the stake, and the three

<sup>1</sup> R.O. Parliament Roll, 32 Henry VIII. (1540), c. 57: unpublished

martyrs of Christ submitted to the no less cruel penalties of high treason.

The sensation caused by this brutal tyranny was deep and widespread. Marillac, the French Ambassador, indeed the only foreign ambassador then resident in England, wrote of it to King Francis in the following terms:

“Sire,—Your Majesty will have heard, from what I have before written, of the execution here of Master Thomas Cromwell and of Lord Hungerfort, which was followed two days after by that of six Doctors of whom three, as traitors, were hanged and treated in the accustomed manner, accused of having formerly spoken in favour of the Pope. Their names were Pol [Powell], Abel, and “le prieur Doncaster.”<sup>1</sup> The three others were burnt as heretics; they were Drs. Barnes, Gagard [Garret], and Hieronymus [Jerome].

“It was certainly a marvellous spectacle to see dying on the same day and at the same hour those who adhered to the two contrary parties. It gave scandal also to both sides, each pretending to have been offended. It was, moreover, not less strange to hear than horrible to see. There was stubbornness and constancy respectively on the one side and on the other. All unanimously complained that the forms of justice had in no way been observed,

<sup>1</sup> This is an error. Laurence Cooke, the Prior of the Carmelites at Doncaster, had been attainted in company with Powell and Abel, but was executed a few days after. Marillac should have said Fetherston.

but rather perverted in their regard. In spite of the gravity and ignominy of their sentence, they had never, they affirmed, been summoned [for trial], nor did they know the cause for which they had been condemned. Thus the state of Christians in this dispensation of grace was worse than that of the Jews at the time of the rigour of the [Old] Law, which forbad that a man should be judged, unless he had first been heard, and then convicted. The laws of all the wise men of old, of emperors and others, Christian and pagan, have ordained the same thing, which is observed throughout the world, except in England.

“Here an Act of Parliament has been lately passed, by which it is ordained that if two witnesses (even if otherwise uncalled and unsummoned) come and swear before the King’s Council, that they have heard someone say some word against the edicts of the said Lord touching the obedience due to him and to the Articles of religion, then without any other form of process the accused, even if he be absent and ignorant of it, shall without delay be condemned to suffer death according to the established penalties. In consequence of this, Sire, everyone here is in marvellous trouble, for all may feel fear, and can never be secure in their innocence. For facility is given to the ill-disposed to revenge themselves at their leisure on those they hate, and increased opportunities are offered to those who, through corruption or any other evil passion, wish to bring false testimony. Consequently injustice may be done to the good, and impunity awaits the

wicked, since they will not be confronted or answered by those whom they have denounced.

“Of the iniquity of this law, if it can be called a law, we have seen a recent example in the complaints of the above-mentioned Doctors who were executed, and . . . who suffered as traitors. One of them declared that he had neither spoken for nor against the authority of the Pope, that he did not know he had ever said anything which could have moved the King to indignation against him, unless it was that, ten years ago, being required to give his opinion as to the divorce of Queen Catherine, the aunt of the Emperor, he said it seemed to him that the said Lady was the legitimate spouse of the said Lord, and that it was not lawful to put her away.

“Because of this, Sire, and the declaration that each of the others made regarding himself, the people began to murmur loudly, so that, with their natural love of change, if they had had a leader they might have caused a tumult and great insurrection. To obviate which, Commissioners were suddenly deputed to inquire as to those who approved of, or who spoke of what the above-mentioned doctors said at the time of their execution. This provides fresh matter for greater butchery than before, for it is very difficult to have a people entirely alienated from new errors, when they hold with the ancient authority of the Church, and are for the Apostolic See. Nor on the contrary, if they hate the Pope much, will they fail to share in some opinions of the Germans.

"However, the Government here desire neither the one nor the other, but rather wish that what is ordained be observed. But this is so often altered and changed, that no one can understand it.

"It only remains for me, Sire, to say a word about the rest of those whom they have put to death, and all for treason. They suffered last Wednesday, and were ten in number. Among them was Sir N. Carew, the natural son of the late Grand Master of the Horse (*Escuyer*), and a Carthusian [Horne], who would never leave off his habit. The others were of humble condition and unknown."<sup>1</sup>

The sufferers on Wednesday, the 4th of August, 1540, according to the English chronicles, were Laurence Cooke, Carmelite, William Horne, Carthusian, Giles Heron, son-in-law of Blessed Thomas More; four others accused (perhaps from religious motives) of treason at Calais, Clement Philpot, Edmund Brindholme, priest, Robert Bird, and Darby Genning. Charles Carew, who suffered at the same time, was accused of robbing Lady Carew. Marillac therefore, as it seems, should have said that there were ten in all who suffered for religion.

<sup>1</sup> J. Kaulek, *Correspondance de MM. de Castillon et de Marillac*. Paris, 1885, pp. 208—210.



## II. Blessed Edward Powell.

The Blessed Edward Powell was a native of the Principality of Wales, and received his higher education at the University of Oxford. Under the year 1495 his name is found as a Fellow of Oriel College, and in 1501 he was presented to the Rectory of Bleadon, in the diocese of Wells. It was apparently about the same time that he accepted a prebend in the Cathedral of Salisbury, with the Vicarage of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, and, two years later, a similar benefice at Lincoln, by virtue of a license from Pope Leo X., permitting him a plurality of benefices.

After his degrees in Arts, Powell proceeded to theology, and took the degree of Doctor in 1506, with such applause, that he was styled by the University *perdoctus vir*, a very learned man.

On occasion of his promotion, he became a benefactor to the University by a gift of £30 for the roofing and adorning the ceiling of the old Congregation House, a building which still remains in St. Mary's Churchyard. This was in the year 1506 or 1507.

The first published work of Dr. Powell was a treatise against the heresies of Luther. Its title is *Propugnaculum summi Sacerdotii Evangelici ac septem Sacramentorum, æditum per virum eruditum, sacrarum literarum professorem Edoardum Poelum adversus Martinum Lutherum fratrem famosum et Wiclifistam insignem. . . . Impressum Londini in ædibus Pynsoni-*

*anis M.D.xxiii. Tertio no. Decemb.* It is a beautifully printed volume of 180 pages quarto, and is written in the form of a dialogue between Powell and Luther. From an extant letter from Powell to Wolsey, it would appear that this book had been in preparation for a year.<sup>1</sup>

English scholars of that day were not a little proud of it, for orthodoxy was then very much in fashion. The University of Oxford not only honourably noticed the author, but wrote to Audley, the Bishop of Salisbury, to congratulate him on the learning displayed by one of the Prebendaries of his Church. In their letter they say "that from the time when these questions first began to be contested among the learned, Powell was always so assiduous, devoted to the work, and so diligent, and, lastly, attacked these heresies with such learning, that from his extraordinary labours and most vigilant studies we may well expect that no little honour will accrue to our University." Subsequently again, when they wrote to the King in commendation of those members of their body who had written against Luther, they make special mention of Powell. "It seems proper to select the work of Dr. Powell as a chief and brilliant gem. In truth, he spent such great labour, undertook such frequent journeys, and manifested such vigilance in this business, that unless we were to attribute extraordinary praise to him, we should evidently be doing him wrong or rather treating him with inhumanity. This work of his he has divided into

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. iii. n. 2692. The book is in the British Museum.

two chief sections, the former on the Sovereign Pontiff and the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the latter on the other Sacraments. This man we commend to your Highness, that as you already regard him with singular favour, you may, as we pray, be still more favourable to him by reason of our commendation.”<sup>1</sup>

When these letters were written, the unhappy King, who was still a zealous Catholic, had himself written an able treatise against the heresies of Luther, and had received, or was about to receive, from the Pontiff the most honourable title of Defender of the Faith, a title which was to be so grievously abused by himself and by his successors on the throne.

When the cause of the divorce was to be heard before the Papal Legates, the counsel of the Queen included the most able theologians and canonists to be found in the realm. Besides Archbishop Warham, Bishop Fisher, and other prelates, four doctors in theology were chosen as their assistants. Edward Powell was one of these, and besides his plea in court, in which he declared that in all he had said he was moved by the love of God and the truth, he wrote a treatise on the subject, which the Legates were humbly asked to read.<sup>2</sup>

Though Powell was more eminent as a theologian than the other two martyrs who suffered with him, he does not seem to have taken a more noticeable

<sup>1</sup> Wood (Edit. Bliss), *Athena Oxonienses*, p. 118, from a MS. in the Bodleian, *Epistola Universitatis Oxoniensis*, ep. 87, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Sander (Edit. Lewis), p. 67.

part in the divorce proceedings than they. Indeed, seeing that Queen Catherine appealed to Rome as soon as the Legatine court opened (on which occasion Fisher, Standish, and Robert Ridley had appeared as her counsel), and refused to defend her cause in England, we can easily understand why none of her advocates are mentioned in the records of the proceedings. Blessed John Fisher's speech to the court (on the 28th of June, 1529) was indeed memorable, but it was delivered, not as an advocate of the Queen, but only as *amicus curiæ*, because Henry had invited "every one (who was able) to throw light on the investigation."<sup>1</sup> But in the vote passed by the Convocation of Canterbury, which began on the 5th of November, 1529, where only nineteen theologians had the courage to speak in favour of Catherine's marriage, the names of Powell and Fetherston, as well as those of Fisher and of Hugh Abbot of Reading, are found.<sup>2</sup> As the quarrel between Henry and the Church became more acute, Powell seems to have devoted more and more of his energies to preaching against the erroneous teaching, which was becoming daily more widespread. He had long before won some reputation as a preacher, and praises are recorded of "a Latin sermon in very elegant style," delivered by him on the 20th of March, 1500, during the visitation of Lincoln Cathedral by Bishop William Smyth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Van Ortoy, *Vie de Fisher*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Pocock, *Records of the Reformation*, ii. p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> R. Churton, *Lives of Bp. W. Smyth and Sir R. Sutton*, 1800, p. 118. The text was aptly chosen, "Go and see whether it be well with thy brethren." (Gen. xxxvii. 14.)

Powell appears to have now preached in many places, but the most celebrated of his sermons were those in answer to Latimer at Bristol in the year 1533. The story is briefly told by a chronicler of that town.

"Great troubles there were all over England about preaching, particularly in Bristol, where Mr. Latimer preached, and there preached against him Mr. Habberton and Doctor Powell, so that there were great part-takings on both sides; in so much that divers priests and others set up bills against the Mayor and Mr. Latimer. But the Mayor, permitting laymen to preach, caused divers priests to be apprehended and cast into the prison of Newgate [*i.e.*, the Newgate at Bristol] with bolts upon them; and divers others ran away and lost their livings."<sup>1</sup>

Latimer and his associates retaliated on those who impugned his orthodoxy by appealing to Henry's ministers, and an inquiry was held which lasted for some months. From the extant papers regarding it,<sup>2</sup> it appears that Latimer had been "playing the fool, according to his customable manner,"<sup>3</sup> with Catholic doctrine, while Habberdyne seems to have been somewhat warm in his answer. Latimer enters into long digressions to repel Habberdyne's charges. Against Powell he or his advocates allege less, but what was said was calculated to irritate Henry

<sup>1</sup> S. Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, ii. p. 216. Cf. "The Bristol pulpit under Henry VIII.," by Father Bridgett, *Dublin Review*, 1879, i. p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in full in the seventh volume of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. vii. Appendix, n. 9. <sup>3</sup> See above, p. 312.

not a little. It was stated that at St. Augustine's Green, upon St. Mark's Day, on the 25th of April, 1533, Powell had declared that a prince ought not to break his contract of marriage, when the Church will not or cannot dispense him, and that the power of the Church was above that of the worldly ruler.

"Doctor Powell's saying, as followeth, in the pulpit within the town of Bristol, upon St. Mark's day [Friday, April 25, 1533], and the Sunday following. *Anno regni Henrici VIII. vigesimo quinto.*

"*Memorandum*, that Dr. Powell in his sermon spoken at St. Augustine's Green, said very seditiously, to the great inquieting and stirring of the people, when he entreated of 'the chair of pestilence' [Ps. i. 1], saying 'that two manner of people sit therein. One and the first be those which corrupteth and infecteth the people with open sinning and evil ensample of living. As he that doth put away his first wife and taketh another without assent or dispensation of the Church. And specially in a head or governor, as in a king, which doth occasion other, that heareth and seeth the same, to follow and to do likewise, as King David with his adultery sat also in the chair of pestilence.' Which his saying sounded to the hearers to the reproof of the King their governor, and to their no little offence and grief.

"Also, upon [the] Sunday after, he noted upon this text *Virga directionis* [Ps. xl. 7], the Sacrament of Order. And here he noted that kings and

princes are subject to priests and prelates, with vehement enhancing of the same. And then spake nothing of the subjection of priests and prelates to the princes and governors, which offended the people not a little.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether this was proved or not we do not know, but there is a letter extant from Richard Hilley, Chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral, to Cromwell, dated August the 7th, stating that Powell would obey the summons to come to London by the 18th, he being at the moment in the doctor’s hands with a bad leg. Cromwell no doubt did his best to brow-beat the martyr, when he did come, but whether he took any other measures we do not know.

Early next year, we find another letter, showing that Powell was still suffering for his courage and orthodoxy. An unworthy priest named Richard Arche asks Cromwell on January the 8th [1534], that Dr. Powell, who was one of the procurators for the diocese of Salisbury, may be removed from his post, and that he, Arche, may be appointed in his stead. This would ensure the submission of the diocese to the King, “whereas the others, as you know, were directly against the King.”<sup>2</sup> It is easy to see how the English clergy made such a bad fight against the Tudors, when their representatives could be removed by the crown, at the request of any worthless schemer. This letter suggests (what we know from other sources to have been the case),

<sup>1</sup> Foxe, Edit. Townsend, vii. Ap. ix. *Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 572.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 27.

that this subversion of right order was a matter of every-day occurrence.

The following informations were elicited from one of Powell's servants, perhaps at the same time as the above letter. It is evident that the men who exacted them, meant to pursue matters against Powell to the uttermost.

"First that my master Dr. Powell spake against the King's highness marriage, that it was not lawful. He hath said it to me divers times. But [? even] if there were any learned men that can prove it contrary to him by Scripture, he would never think it lawful and according to his judgment. He made a book against it.

"Item, I have heard him say that my Lord of Wiltshire was a heretic. He said to me the last summer, when he lay here, and that he spake it to my Lord's grace.

"Item, He hath made certain books (as a book against the marriage of the King's noble grace), and other books which all be at home.

"Item, He hath said that the French King will never be true to the King's grace, our sovereign lord. He said it to me and to other of his servants, as John Murton and Edmond Payntar.

"Item, He hath a prebend at Salisbury, and another at Lincoln.

"Item, He hath a benefice in the town of Sarum called St. Edmond's, to that pertaineth St. Martin's in the said town, Whitparish, Compton Chammerlayn, Whitchurch, and Homington.



“Item, He hath a benefice called Milksame.

“Item, He hath a benefice called Bledon.

“Item, For his substance, to my knowledge [it] remaineth in his house.

“Item, What treasure he hath conveyed? I know of none.

“Item, For his companions, [they] be the Masters of the close of Sarum and such as be of his parishioners, and one John Hamon, his man of law.

“Item, What other goods and chattels? I am not privy of [any].

“Item, Who hath been most secret with him of his servants? [It] is one John Murton. Also he hath the keeping of his house.

“Item, There be at home John Murton, Edmond Payntar, Lawrence Martin, and Paul Sendency.

“Item, He hath here in London five horses, and one at home. The colour of them is—a bay, two sorrel, a black, and a gray; and a black at home.

“Item, Who it is that he trusteth best? To my perseverance (*sic*)—the Masters of the close as Master Chancellor and Master Baker.

“Item, What intelligence he hath had from Oxford? There was a scholar with him in the Lent, or thereabout. But I cannot say that he came from Oxford.”<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that the blow, which this paper foreshadows, must have fallen early in 1534, and in April we find him writing the following touching letter from Dorchester Gaol to Sir Thomas Arnold.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 28.

“ Right worshipful my duty premised. In most humble wise, and for the Passion of Christ I beseech your good mastership, [being] your daily bedeman, that of abundant goodness and charity, it may please your mastership to take pity and compassion on me, that had been long ere now cast away, an your mastership had not pitied me: and now my keeper, which was one of my twelve men, saith, as he would it were that your mastership had withdrawn from me your charitable goodness. Thereupon he was not content to set me in the chain, but now he hath taken from me my own bed, and hath tied me so that I cannot lay down on the boards but am hanged in the collar, and do lie in the stocks with gyves on my legs. And I shall never beseech help of God nor of your mastership, if ever I did mis-say the keeper or mis-do him in word nor deed, till I was set in the stocks. And now for lack of money, I am liked to be lamed in all my limbs, without God and your mastership have pity and compassion on me, for other hope than that I have in God and in your mastership his charitable goodness, I have none, as knoweth God. To whom I shall daily, as I am bound to, pray for the long, prosperous preservation of your good mastership, long to continue in prosperity. Written in stocks at the gaol in Dorchester the 12th day of April

“ by your daily bedeman,

“ EDWARD POWELL, prisoner.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R.O. State Papers, Henry VIII. viii. 534 (92, fol. 5). Autograph.

Powell says he might "long ere this" have been "cast away" but for his correspondent's friendship. This suggests to us that he had been in durance for some time before he wrote this letter in April, but how long we do not know, nor what formal cause was alleged for his arrest. The sequel showed plainly that the real reason was his refusal of the oath of supremacy, and his defence of that marriage, which was upheld by the Church.

On the 10th of June, 1534, he was consigned to the Tower of London. The exact locality of his cell in that prison is not specified in precise terms, but it would seem that it was in the White Tower.<sup>1</sup> Here he was doubtless examined, though no record of his answers remains. Later on, the Parliament, which sat from November the 3rd to December the 19th, condemned him to forfeiture and imprisonment in the same Act by which Blessed John Fisher, Blessed Richard Fetherston, Nicholas Wilson, late confessor of the King, Miles Willen, Canon of Windsor, and Christopher Plummer, Prebendary of Chichester, were attainted. It seems most probable that under the words, "Several offences of misprision of high treason," were included the sermons at Bristol, of which we have already heard. That part of the Act which regards Powell and Fetherston, was as follows:

"Forasmuch as John, Bishop of Rochester, Christopher Plumer, Nicholas Wylson, Miles Wyllen, . . . Edwarde Powell, late of the city of Newe Salisbury in the county of Wilts, clerk, and Richard

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 1001.

Fetherston, otherwise called Richard Fetherston Haugh, late of London, clerk, contrary to their duties of allegiance, &c., that is to say the said Bishop, Nicholas Wilson, and Richard Fetherston . . . since the first day of May last past were severally required to receive and make their corporal oaths, made and provided by a Statute made for the surety, stablishment, and continuance of the King our Sovereign Lord, and his heirs in the succession . . . and have refused the same oaths. And also . . . Plumer, Wyllen . . . and Edward Powell have committed . . . several offences of misprision of High Treason. . . . Therefore they shall suffer imprisonment, forfeiture, &c., and other penalties contained, specified, and declared in the said Statute, &c.”<sup>1</sup>

The stray references to Powell during his incarceration have already been noticed in the life of Abel. A short bill, however, belonging to midsummer, 1536, has survived and is of interest as showing the cupidity of Henry's Government. They were then exacting some old debts due to Powell at Salisbury, which were now forfeit to the crown.<sup>2</sup> There was another Dr. Powell, a Government paymaster, notices of whose money matters are also preserved.<sup>3</sup> This man must not be confounded with our martyr.

He remained in prison till the year 1540, either the whole of the time in the Tower, or the latter portion of the time in Newgate, as it would seem

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes of Realm* (1810), iii. 527. 26 Hen. VIII. c. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. x. n. 1257 (vii.). <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vii. n. 1104, ix. n. 1535.

from the Chronicle of Stow already quoted. His confinement was rigorous, and the keeper was himself sent to the Marshalsea two months before their martyrdom for allowing Powell and Abel to go out on bail.

The execution took place in virtue of the second Act of Attainder which was cited in the previous section, and he suffered at Smithfield, in company with the two other Blessed Martyrs, Thomas Abel and Richard Fetherston, and the three apostate priests, Barnes, Gerard, and Jerome.

We have every reason to regret that the scanty records remaining do not permit us to say more of the internal and spiritual life of the Blessed Edward Powell. We know how he devoted his learning and his talents to the cause of God's truth; we see how intrepidly he witnessed a good confession; and we are persuaded that during the long years of his imprisonment his soul must have been purified by suffering, and that he was ripe for the glorious crown prepared for him.

### *III. Blessed Richard Fetherston.*

The Blessed Richard Fetherston was associated with the two last-mentioned martyrs, both in his opposition to the impious assumptions of the King, and in the glorious death which was the consequence of this opposition.

As is the case with other persons of this time, there are some rather strange variants in the name of our martyr. That it should be found spelt

Featherstone, Federston, and Fetherston, will cause no wonder. But his act of attainder says he was also called Fetherstonhaugh (as if he had belonged to the great northern family of that name), and his Christian name appears (but probably by error only) as John, and Nicholas, as well as Richard. It is probably due to this confusion that so little is known about his early life. We do not know where he obtained his title of Doctor, but it is supposed that he was at Cambridge. Our earliest information concerning him is found in the letters patent appointing him Archdeacon of Brecknock, in the diocese of St. David's. These are dated the 8th of April, 1523.<sup>1</sup> Why this preferment was given him we do not know. Presumably it was due to Mary "Princess of Wales," whose preceptor he became at or about that time.

By 1525, Fetherston had begun to teach the Princess Latin, and Queen Catherine thus refers to him: "As for your writing in Lattine I am glad that ye should chaunge from me to Maister Federston, for that shall do you moche good to lerne by him to write right. But yet some tymes I wold be glad when ye doo write to Maister Federston of your own enditing, when he hath rede it, that I may see it. For it shall be a grete comfort to me to see you keep your Latten and fayer writing and all."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R.O. Patent Roll, 14 Henry VIII. pt. 2. Fetherston is here simply described as "clericus."

<sup>2</sup> In *Letters and Papers*, vol. iv. (i.) n. 1519, this undated letter is assigned to July, 1525.

In 1526, "Dr. Federston, schoolmaster," took his part in the court which the Princess Mary kept at Ludlow when President of the Western Marches, and mention is made in her accounts of cloth given to two of Mr. Federston's servants, presumably for their liveries. The latest reference to Fetherston in this capacity of schoolmaster is dated the 1st of October, 1533.<sup>1</sup>

To hold a position of such confidence in the household of this most virtuous Queen would alone be a sufficient attestation of his piety and virtue; and that he was chosen to be one of her advisers in the case of the divorce, is a proof that his learning was held in high estimation. His zeal in this righteous cause is proved by his vote in the Convocation of November, 1529, to which allusion has already been made.

Chapuys, on the 22nd of April, 1534, wrote to Charles V. a story, which, Dr. Gairdner thinks, may apply to Fetherston. The Princess having heard that Henry and Anne were actually threatening to put her to death, desired to give notice of this to Chapuys, in order that he and his master might save her. But the difficulty of finding a messenger was very great, for all her own servants had been taken away, and she was beset with spies. She asked to speak with "a physician who had formerly been her preceptor," but this was refused. At last finding herself in his company and attended by servants who knew no Latin, she remarked that "she had been so long without talking that language

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* n. 1577, 2, iv.; and n. 2331, 2; vol. vi. n. 1199.

that she could not say two words. The physician desiring her to say something in Latin, she told him what the King had that day said. The physician was astonished, and knew not what to answer except that that was not good Latin, and sent to inform me immediately."<sup>1</sup> As Fetherston was evidently a man of many accomplishments, it may well be that he was in those days reckoned good enough to be the Princess's physician. Against this is to be set his ecclesiastical dignity, which would perhaps have debarred him from practising.

We do not know the excuse which was employed for first putting him under restraint. Perhaps it was that some good office to his old pupil, such as the above, was discovered, probably (to judge from the act of attainder already quoted) there were no other matters of complaint against him, except his rejection of the oath which was tendered him concerning the Succession, and which, as we know, generally included clauses relating to the validity of the King's first marriage and to his Supremacy. Anyway, he was included in the Act already quoted, which condemned Fisher for refusing this oath (November, 1534), and on December the 13th following he was confined in the Tower with Dr. Powell—probably in the White Tower.

From this time till his martyrdom his lot was that of his fellow-sufferers, and the scanty references to their various hardships have already been described in the previous lives.

The consummation of this iniquity was deferred

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* viii. n. 530.



till the year 1540. Blessed Richard Fetherston and his companions were then finally summoned to make their submission, and on their "denying the King's Supremacy and affirming that the marriage with the Lady Catherine was good," they were attainted of high treason by the Act of Parliament already quoted. Blessed Richard suffered at Smithfield in the same manner and at the same time as the other two. Like them he was bound on his hurdle in company with a Zwinglian heretic. All was done that could be devised to bring contempt on his death; but that death was precious in the sight of God, and all such insults only added to the glory of the martyr's crown.

J. H. P.

AUTHORITIES.—Anthony à Wood (Edit. Bliss), *Athenæ Oxonienses*, i. 118—120, has given full particulars about the University careers, and the benefices held by the two martyrs educated at Oxford. See also J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, and T. Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica*.

The Catholic writers, Pitts, Dodd, &c., rely chiefly on the statement of Sander, *Anglican Schism* (Edit. Lewis, p. 67), referred to above, p. 486. There are good notices in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, by Mr. J. Gairdner, Mr. A. F. Pollard, and Mr. C. Trice Martin.

The death of the martyrs made a great impression, and the fact is recorded by all the chroniclers. Stow, however, makes the evident error of saying that Dr. Powell published a book in quarto on the divorce, "which I have seen." The description tallies exactly with Abel's published book, which he does not mention; while there is no trace of a printed work by Powell on this subject.

After the martyrdom a curious pamphlet was published, of which there is a copy at the British Museum (c. 27. a. 40). It is entitled *The metynge of Doctor. Barons and doctor Powell at*

*Paradise gate & of theyr comunicacion : bothe drawen to Smith-fylde from the Towar. The one burned for Heresy, as the papists do saye truly, and the other quartered for popery, and all within one houre.*

The dialogue begins by Powell interrogating Barnes.

It is sene oftén  
that men mete now and then,  
but so do hylles never.  
What wynde drave thee hether ?

Barnes replies by speaking at some length on his innocence and harmlessness, severely blaming those who held to the old faith. After some pages Powell says,

Cease thy communication  
against the old fashion,  
our Catholyke tradition.  
What doest thou knowe  
of bate or sedicion  
of grudge or rebelliyon  
within Englysh region,  
that the old sorte did sowe ?  
I see thou dust not fayle  
to jeste and to rayle  
with an evell tayle  
and malyciouslye to crowe.

Barnes does not answer this challenge, but continues "to jeste and to rayle" in this fashion,

Thou Popish ass !  
Shall I let pass  
the prelates' iniquitas ? &c.

It is hard to make out who is supposed to have the best of the argument, and this is probably intended by the writer. Powell's speeches are the more dignified and sensible, but he never goes to the root of the matter, or sets forth the real strength of his case. Barnes's part, on the other hand, may perhaps be likened to that of a clown, who is allowed "to jeste and to rayle," where open argument would be dangerous. His speeches are by far the longer, and are thus calculated to have the chief effect upon the reader's mind. Heresy was largely propagated at that time by talking and writing of this nature.

#### XIV.

### THE BLESSED MARGARET POLE, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY.

*London, East Smithfield, 28 May, 1541.*

IN the spring of the year 1471 the battle of Tewkesbury and the deaths of Henry VI. and of Prince Edward of Lancaster finally secured Edward IV. possession of the throne of England. At the same time George, Duke of Clarence, his younger brother, who had contributed to the Yorkist victory, appeared to have blotted out the memory of his previous unfaithfulness to the cause and to be solidly reconciled to the King.

It was about this time that his daughter Margaret, the future martyr, was born at Castle Farley, near Bath, the date given by Fuller being the 14th of August, 1473. Clarence had married at Calais on the 11th of January, 1469, Isabel, the elder daughter of the great Earl of Warwick, the "king-maker," and at the time of Margaret's birth had one other child, the ill-fated Edward, Earl of Warwick.

The life that opened with so fair-seeming a prospect was destined to be sanctified by strange

reverses and great sorrows. The little Margaret was but three years old when her mother died,<sup>1</sup> and but a year later her father was arraigned by his royal brother on a charge of high treason and put to death, or at all events found dead in the Tower.<sup>2</sup>

Who took charge of the orphans, or where they passed their childish years does not clearly appear, but in 1480 Edward of Warwick seems to have been living with Elizabeth of York and her young brothers and sisters, children of Edward IV., at the palace of Shene, which was the nursery of the royal children.<sup>3</sup> It is scarcely probable that one of the two orphans should have been living with their royal cousins and not the other, and it seems likely that whether moved by pity and remorse, or influenced by the good heart of the Queen, Edward had taken charge of the children of his murdered brother, and brought them up with his own.

Margaret was, however, not ten years old when this peaceful time at Shene came to an abrupt end. On the 9th of April, 1483, the King died, and within a few weeks the young Prince of Wales (now Edward V.) and his brother, her cousins and play-mates, were in the power of their uncle, who soon seized the throne as Richard III., and the Queen,

<sup>1</sup> December 22, 1476. (Lingard.)

<sup>2</sup> January 16, 1478. There does not seem to be any historical foundation for the popular story that he was drowned in a butt of his favourite wine.

<sup>3</sup> There are entries in the wardrobe expenses of that year of articles of clothing supplied to the Earl of Warwick amongst those for some of the royal children and officers of the King's household. (Sir Harris Nicolas, *Wardrobe Expenses of Edward IV.* pp. 157, 158.) Only the entries of 1480 are published.

a heart-broken fugitive, with the five young Princesses took refuge in the sanctuary at Westminster; while before the end of the summer it was known that the royal brothers had been foully murdered in the Tower.

The new Queen took young Warwick (and presumably his sister) with her to their ancestral home, Warwick Castle, which in fact was her own birthplace, and there the King joined her and kept Court for a week. The position of Clarence's orphans must have been most insecure, since they were the children of Richard's eldest brother; in fact Warwick was now the nearest male heir to Edward IV.<sup>1</sup>

But before long a strange turn in their fortunes occurred. Just a year after Richard's usurpation, his only son died, and shortly afterwards Edward of Warwick was proclaimed heir to the throne, and took his place at Court and at the royal table accordingly. His sister would of course share with him this short-lived honour. There were for the moment only two lives between her and the throne. But this only lasted for a year.

It had no doubt been due to the influence of Queen Anne, who was the younger daughter of the "king-maker," and therefore the children's maternal aunt, and at her death in 1485 it ceased. Richard now changed his plans, and declared another boy-

<sup>1</sup> The Act of Parliament which settled the crown on Richard and his heirs, had been careful to exclude from the succession the children of the late Duke of Clarence, on the pretext of their father's attainder.

nephew, John, Earl of Lincoln, son of his sister Margaret, Duchess of Suffolk, his heir presumptive.

Edward of Warwick was removed to Sheriff Hutton, in Yorkshire, where although in one of his father's baronial castles, he was a prisoner, kept under close ward. The King shortly afterwards sent to join him his cousin, Princess Elizabeth,<sup>1</sup> soon to be Henry VII.'s Queen, and we can have small doubt that Margaret was there too.

The 22nd of August of the same year put an end to Richard's reign and life on the field of Bosworth. The Princess Elizabeth exchanged her prison for the throne as consort of Henry VII., but Edward of Warwick, as the male representative of the Yorkist line, was too important to be set free, and only passed from the prison of his own castle to that of the Tower. Margaret was but a child of twelve; there had been no instance yet of a Queen regnant in England, and if a Princess were to succeed, all the daughters of Edward IV. would claim before her, and Elizabeth of York, the Queen Consort, in the first place, so soon as Henry had annulled the act of his predecessor, making the children of Edward legally illegitimate. Margaret therefore gave no anxiety to the new Sovereign, and we may easily understand that the remembrance of companionship at Shene and at Sheriff Hutton would have secured for her the friendship or even affection of her cousin, the Queen. But the lot of her only brother must have been both a sorrow and

<sup>1</sup> Miss Strickland, *Queens of England*, vol. ii. p. 393. Life of Elizabeth of York.

an anxiety to her. For some time his destiny was kept a profound Court secret. But in 1487 the King, with a view to expose the imposture of Lambert Simnel, caused him to be brought out from the Tower and conducted in a public manner through the city to Shene, where he was well known. He was also received by the Queen and several noblemen, and no doubt on this occasion Margaret must have had the comfort of seeing him. Twelve years later, on the 28th of November, 1499, she had to endure the sorrow of his public execution on Tower Hill, under the pretext of some supposed treason. Cardinal Pole declares that his uncle was as innocent as a child of a year old. Catherine of Arragon, who must have had the best means of knowing, ever believed, though Lingard treats the rumour as unfounded, that her father, Ferdinand of Arragon, had refused to give her in marriage to Prince Arthur as long as a male heir of the house of York was living, and that the innocent Warwick was put to death to remove this difficulty. So many cruel vicissitudes, especially in early life, could not but exercise a decisive influence on Margaret's character, and we see in them the means God used to mature the virtues of His servant and prepare her for the grace of martyrdom which was to crown her life after many years.

At the time of her brother's death she had been several years married. Cardinal Pole was born in 1500, and he was her fourth child.

According to the best authorities the marriage had taken place about 1491, when Margaret was

eighteen years of age.<sup>1</sup> With the double object of honouring a favoured subject by an alliance with the royal blood, and of precluding any revival of Plantagenet claims by uniting Margaret to a subject of tried fidelity, the King chose for her husband Sir Richard Pole. He was on his father's side of a Buckinghamshire family, but on his mother's was nearly related to the first Tudor sovereign,<sup>2</sup> and had followed Henry's fortunes. He was created a Knight of the Garter, and Chamberlain to the Queen, and on the birth of Arthur (A.D. 1486) was made governor to the Prince. He continued to hold this office on Arthur's marriage to Catherine of Arragon, and when a princely Court was installed at Ludlow Castle for the newly married pair (A.D. 1502) Margaret also formed part of it, as one of the Princess's household.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Richard Pole died the next year,<sup>4</sup> and would seem to have left his widow but poorly provided for, as his funeral expenses were paid by the King, not a man at all likely to spend the £40 needlessly. Margaret was left with five children, all young, to bring up. It is to be presumed that she continued her office about the Princess Catherine, on which she had entered at Ludlow, but we lose sight of her for some years. There is no doubt, however,

<sup>1</sup> Gairdner, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xlv. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Richard Pole's mother, and Margaret, Countess of Richmond, were half-sisters. See Burke's *Extinct Peerages*.

<sup>3</sup> Miss Strickland, *Queens of England*, vol. ii. p. 509.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Harris Nicolas, *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York*, p. 182, where there is an entry, Nov. 15, 1503: "To my Lord Herbert in loan by his bille for burying Sir Richard Pole, £40."



that Henry VIII. continued to her the favour she had enjoyed under the previous reign, for in 1513 he granted her petition, "that whereas by an Act of Parliament, passed the 19th of Henry VII., Edward, Earl of Warwick, was declared a traitor and his lands forfeited, it would please the King that she might inherit, as being the sister and next of blood, to his state and dignity, and so be styled Countess of Sarum."<sup>1</sup> The attainder was reversed on the 7th of November, 1513, and on March the 4th of the following year the Parliament passed an Act of Restitution in favour of Margaret, who thus entered into the enjoyment of her ancestral possessions. "She thus became possessed of a very magnificent property, lying chiefly in Hampshire, Wiltshire, the western counties, and Essex. But there is no doubt it was heavily burdened by redemption money claimed by the King. On the 25th of May, 1512, she paid Wolsey £1,000, and in 1538 was sued for a further instalment of £2,333 6s. 8d."<sup>2</sup>

She probably owed her reinstatement in the King's favour to Catherine of Arragon, who had been married to him shortly after his accession in 1509.

Besides the affection which Catherine formed for her from their first meeting, and which never wavered till her death, she ever looked upon herself as the innocent cause of the death of the Earl of Warwick, and was anxious to make all the

<sup>1</sup> October 14, 1513.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*.

reparation in her power to his sister and her family.<sup>1</sup>

When the Princess Mary was born (A.D. 1516), it was Margaret of Salisbury who on the third day carried her to her baptism in the Greyfriars Church at Greenwich, and immediately afterwards was her sponsor in Confirmation.<sup>2</sup>

A more important mark of trust and favour was her appointment as Lady Governess of the Princess and her household.<sup>3</sup> In this position she presided over a veritable Court when (1525) the King sent his little daughter of nine years old to reside at Ludlow, with a Council and a large household.<sup>4</sup> The Lady Governess received minute instructions of which the following is the preamble. "First, principally and above all things, the Countess of Salisbury, being Lady Governess, shall according to the singular confidence that the King's Highness hath in her, give most tender regard to all such

<sup>1</sup> See her Life by Miss Strickland, ii. p. 509.

<sup>2</sup> See a vivid picture of this memorable event in *Mary I. Queen of England*, by J. M. Stone, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> There is some uncertainty about the period at which she received this appointment. Miss Strickland (*Queens of England*, vol. iii. p. 303) says: "After the first months of her infancy . . . the care of her person was entrusted to Margaret Bryan, the wife of Sir Thomas Bryan, who was called the Lady Mistress, . . . the Countess of Salisbury was state-governess and head of the household." But Sir F. Madden (*Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess Mary*, Introd. p. xx.) understands Lady Margaret to have been "appointed Lady Maistress or Governess to the Princess shortly after her birth, and so continued some years." There is, however, no doubt about the Countess of Salisbury's position from 1525.

<sup>4</sup> Madden, Introd. xxix. The household numbered in all 304 persons, and amongst them many of high rank and importance.

things as concern the person of the said Princess, her honourable education and training in all virtuous demeanour, that is to say, at due times to serve God, from whom all grace and goodness proceedeth."<sup>1</sup> It was on this occasion that the Blessed Richard Fetherston, who also won the martyr's crown, was appointed tutor to the Princess.

The Countess was naturally brought much into the society of the Queen, and Catherine's affection for her overflowed upon her children. Amongst them the object of her special predilection was Reginald, Margaret's fourth son, whom Catherine loved as if he had been her own child. He was sent very early to Oxford, and took his degree at the age of fifteen. He then went to study at the University of Padua, and came home in his twenty-seventh year with a brilliant reputation, striking personal beauty,<sup>2</sup> and great prospects, for the King

<sup>1</sup> As the Blessed Margaret had a large share in the formation of the Princess Mary, it will not be out of place to put before the reader the following estimate of her at this period by Sir Francis Madden, a Protestant, one than whom none was more qualified by intimate knowledge of his subject to form a judgment. "If ever woman," he writes, "undeservedly suffered from insult and degradation, Mary did; and if ever woman cultivated in solitude and retirement the virtues of benevolence, charity, kindness, and unaffected piety, or advanced herself by the acquirement of such branches of science or art as tend to elevate and soften the mind, Mary was that one." These are not mere assertions, but are founded on the authority of existing documents, and on the concessions of many of our latest and best informed writers. (*Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess Mary*. Introductory Memoir.) He enumerates later, among her accomplishments, a good knowledge of Greek and Latin, Italian, Spanish and French, and considerable skill in playing on three musical instruments. Sir F. Madden's work was published in 1831.

<sup>2</sup> *Queens of England*, vol. iii. p. 321.

was attached to him, had borne the whole cost of his education, and from the age of seventeen had provided him with benefices; he was now Dean of Exeter and Prebendary of York, and before long had the offer of the archbishopric of York, on Cardinal Wolsey's death. Reginald was, however, still a layman, and whilst many writers declare that the Princess, now growing into womanhood, showed the greatest partiality for him, the Queen was heard to express a wish that Mary might marry a son of Lady Salisbury, in order to atone for the wrong done to the Earl of Warwick.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the question of Henry's divorce was beginning to be talked about first in whispers and then publicly. Reginald warmly took the part of the injured Queen, and after a stormy scene with Henry, who tried in vain to gain from him some kind of sanction to the divorce, withdrew, as soon as he could get the King's leave, from the country.

A time had now come in England when everyone was obliged to take a side. It is needless to say which side the good Countess of Salisbury took. The divorce was pronounced by Cranmer in May, 1533, the King having previously married Anne Boleyn. But Catherine had already been for nearly two years separated from her child. Lady Salisbury had hitherto been left in charge of her. But when the King ordered Mary to drop the title of Princess and met with a firm refusal, he determined to break up her household and to remove her from the Countess of Salisbury's influence. The blow was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 324.

foreseen both by her and by the Queen. In a letter<sup>1</sup> written by Catherine to her daughter in August, 1533, she says: "I pray you recommend me unto my good lady of Salisbury, and pray her to have a good heart, for we never come to the Kingdom of Heaven but by troubles." The trouble was close at hand. Mary was living at this time at New Hall in Essex.<sup>2</sup> In October, a commission from the King came down to discharge the household, but the measure was not fully carried out till February, 1534. "Worst of all," says Miss Strickland, describing this event, "Mary was torn from her venerable relative, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, by whose arms she had been encircled in the first days of her existence. This was a blow more bitter than the mere deprivation of rank or titles."<sup>3</sup> It was as great a sorrow to the Countess. Chapuys reports to the Emperor on the 16th of December, 1533, that the Lady Governess, "a lady of virtue and honour, if there be one in England, has offered to follow and serve her at her own expense. But it was out of the question that this would be accepted, for in that case they would have had no power over the Princess."<sup>4</sup>

The health both of Lady Salisbury and the Princess suffered. On the 12th of February, 1534,

<sup>1</sup> Arundel MS. British Museum, 151, f. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Now the Convent of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre. The ancient presence-chamber is now the conventual chapel, and the altar occupies the place where once was the royal dais. New Hall, or Beaulieu, was always a favourite residence with Mary.

<sup>3</sup> *Queens of England*, vol. iii, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vi. n. 1528.

Margaret's eldest son, Lord Montague, writes that "his mother is at Bissam and very weak." On the 25th of February, 1535, Chapuys sends a long despatch to the Emperor, relating an interview he has had with the King about Mary's health. He says he had "consulted with the physicians, who were unanimously of opinion that the Princess's illness was caused by distress and sorrow. . . . 'I asked,' he says, 'that he would at least put the Princess under the care of her old *gouvernante*, the Countess of Salisbury, whom she regarded as a second mother.' He replied that the Countess was a fool, of no experience, and that if his daughter had been under her care during this illness she would have died, for she would not have known what to do." In spite of the King's ill-tempered refusal, it would seem as if the Countess was with her again for a time, for in an account of the Princess's (Elizabeth's) household expenses, March 25; 1535, the following passage occurs:<sup>1</sup> "5. Item, where the Lady Mary, the King's daughter, after she was restored to her health of her late infirmity, being in her own house, was much desirous to have meat immediately after she was ready in the morning, or else she should be in danger eftsoons to return to her said infirmity, therefore order was taken by my Lady of Salisbury and the Lord Hussey, by the advice of the physicians, that every day, not being fasted, she should be at dinner between nine and ten of the clock in the morning and to eschew the superfluous breakfasts," &c.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 440.

The breach between the Blessed Margaret and the King was becoming wider. He was resisted by her son Reginald; he was resisted by his own daughter, whom she had brought up and who was devoted to her, and now he was resisted by herself. In fact, it was impossible for any one in Margaret's position to continue long without coming into collision with him, with his measures, or with the men who carried them out. We have seen that she was living at this time at Bisham, a manor belonging to her family, and would naturally have influence in the Priory of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, founded there by Montague, Earl of Salisbury, in the time of Edward III. On the 27th of April, 1535, Sir Nicholas Carew writes to thank Cromwell "for having written in favour of his friend for the Priory of Bissam. Hears that the prior, by the persuasion of my Lady of Salisbury and Warde, with other people, refuses to resign, though even they thought him very unmeet to continue till they saw Cromwell meant to prefer one contrary to their minds."<sup>1</sup> A prior "contrary to their minds" meant one on whom Cromwell could count to be false to his sacred trust and surrender the monastery to the King, and this was exactly what happened—for they succeeded shortly afterwards in making the notorious Barlow prior, and he surrendered the priory next year.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the passing of the Act of Supremacy (February, 1535) he sent imperative commands

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. n. 596.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. vi. p. 575.

to Pole to write him, in clear and explicit terms, his opinion of that measure, as well as of the divorce, under pain of the royal displeasure against himself and those who belonged to him. Again and again during the course of the year Cromwell, Bishop Tunstall, Thomas Starkey, his mother's chaplain, afterwards chaplain to the King, and others wrote to him on their own account and by express command of the King, urging him to hasten his compliance with the royal will.<sup>1</sup> It appears from the correspondence that Henry or his advisers seriously hoped their persuasions, or his own interests, or fear of the royal anger, would at length enlist Pole on the King's side. But when the able *Defence of the Church's Unity*, which was at once a theological treatise and a vigorous denunciation of the King's iniquities, reached Henry in the spring of 1536, his anger knew no bounds. He himself wrote peremptory orders to Pole to return to England, making neither excuse nor delay; Cromwell also writing two successive despatches to urge his immediate obedience. Pole,<sup>2</sup> however, says he saw, like the cautious animal in the fable, the footsteps of those who went into the lion's den, but none of any who came out, and politely declined. The King was foiled, and it needed nothing more to exasperate him: but a new cause of irritation arose at the very moment. The object of his royal indignation was summoned to Rome to take part, by order of Paul III., in drawing up a scheme of

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. viii. nn. 218, 219, 220, 501, 1156.

<sup>2</sup> *Apologia ad Cæsarem*, cap. vi.



reform. He set out from Venice to obey the command, but had only reached Verona when he was overtaken by an English courier with threats from Cromwell and entreaties from his mother and brother, alarmed no doubt for the consequences, to deter him from going on. He has left it on record that both in writing his *Defensio*, and now in obeying the Pope's summons, he but too clearly foresaw that the King would wreak on his family the vengeance he could not execute on himself. But his duty to God and to His Vicar was clear, and he did not hesitate. He arrived in Rome, and before the end of the year (1536), in spite of his own reluctance, was exalted to the Cardinalate, for which his great descent, his edifying life, his brilliant talents, and his courage in defence of the Church marked him out. The cup of Henry's wrath was now full. An attempt must be made to reach the Cardinal abroad, since he will not come home. "There may be found ways enough in Italy," Cromwell wrote in ominous words, "to rid a treacherous subject. Where justice can take no place by process of law at home, sometimes she may be enforced to seek new means abroad."<sup>1</sup> Such threats were no empty words, and various schemes against the Cardinal's life were happily frustrated, leaving proofs of their source in the hands of the intended victim.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xii. (2), n. 795. This letter is a draft, and is ascribed to September, 1537.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistola Poli*, ii. 66, iii. 99, seq. Sir Thomas Wyatt, the English Ambassador in Spain, did all he could to get Pole assassinated.

There was one way, however, in which it was possible to punish him. He had left hostages in Henry's hands. "Pity," said Cromwell in the same letter, "that the folly of one brainsick Poole, or to say better of one witless fool, should be the ruin of so great a family. Let him reign and follow ambition as fast as he can! These that have little offended (saving that he is of their kin), were it not [for] the great mercy and benignity of the Prince, should and might feel what it is to have such a traitor for their kinsman."

This avowal is significant. Early in 1537 the Cardinal was sent by Paul III. as Legate to the Low Countries to bring about a peace between France and the Empire. The effort was made with a view to a General Council and, at the same time, with the hope of exerting an influence on Henry, alarmed by the formidable risings in the North, and of inducing him to make his peace with Church and people. The King and his party believed, or affected to believe, that it was intended to combine a warlike league against him. But Pole always declared<sup>1</sup> that he had none but pacific intentions, and accepted the legation on that basis. Lingard affirms that "the charges against him are satisfactorily refuted by his official and confidential correspondence."<sup>2</sup>

Cromwell now declared that he would make him

<sup>1</sup> *Epistola Poli*, ii. p. 33, iv. p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> The angry King saw hostility in every act of his kinsman. He made the members of the two Houses of Parliament address a severe reproof to him for accepting the Cardinalate and so declaring himself the King's enemy! (*Apologia ad Parliamentum Anglia*, *Ibid.* i. 179.)

for vexation "eat his heart." The French King was invited, in defiance of the laws of all nations, to deliver him up a prisoner to England, and the King proclaimed him a traitor and set a prize of fifty thousand crowns on his head.

Next year the negotiations with a view to the publication of a bull of excommunication against Henry brought about the long-threatened crisis. These negotiations were protracted through the year 1538, and on November the 3rd of that year the Cardinal's brothers, Henry Lord Montague and Sir Geoffrey Pole, Sir Edmund Neville, Lady Montague's brother, the Marquis of Exeter, grandson of Edward IV., with Sir Nicholas Carew, were seized and committed to the Tower on the charge of treason.

When Reginald sent the King his book, *De Unitate*, both his mother and Lord Montague had written to him in strong language of reproof.<sup>1</sup> The aged Countess had even denounced him to her servants as a traitor. The letters, however, as Mr. Gairdner observes, "were written to be shown to the King's Council,<sup>2</sup> by whom they were despatched to Reginald in Italy. Though the Countess's alarm was quite genuine, her disapproval of Reginald's proceedings was not equally sincere. The King well knew that his policy was disliked by the whole family."<sup>3</sup> Indeed he had some time

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xi. n. 93; xiii. ii. nn. 818, 819, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiii. pt. ii. n. 822.

*Dictionary of National Biography*, loc. cit. In her examination in the Tower, Blessed Margaret thus represented her attitude towards the Cardinal and his book: "She said when she spoke with the

before this privately told Castillon, the French Ambassador, that he intended to exterminate the whole family. "It seems," writes the horrified envoy, "that he seeks every imaginable occasion

King's Grace, he showed her how her son had written against him. 'Alas,' said she, 'what grief is this to me to see him whom I bore, set up to be so ungracious and unhappy.' And upon this, when her son Montacute came home to her, she said to him: 'What hath the King showed me of my son? Alas! son,' said she, 'what a child have I in him!' And then my Lord Montacute counselled her to declare him a traitor to their servants, that they might so report him when they came into their countries. And so she called her servants, and declared unto them accordingly to take her son for a traitor for now and ever, and that she would never take him other." (*Letters and Papers*, loc. cit.)

The late Father Morris, S.J., in an interesting article on "Blessed Margaret Pole and her Sons" (*The Month*, vol. lxx. 1889, pp. 515—528), has pointed out that the emphatic language used by the Cardinal against Henry VIII. was a duty in him considering his ecclesiastical position. He felt that the time for soft words was past, and that it was necessary to speak out boldly and to say the truth and the whole truth, at whatever cost; and Pole well knew what pledges he had in England, and how suffering far harder to bear than the loss of his own life would be the result of his plain-speaking. At the same time it is clear that another judgment might easily be formed by those who were in Henry's power. "Those living in England, in the midst of the infatuation about the royal authority that prevailed under the Tudors, would be apt to call those words treason which, in virtue of new-fangled Acts of Parliament, would be treated as treason by the courts. Words are differently chosen by those in durance and those in freedom. Blessed Margaret would never have herself used her son's denunciations of Henry, when all her surroundings urged upon her the supremest caution; and from her point of view, that which he said honestly, and indeed honestly could not leave unsaid, she might condemn, in so far as it went beyond what she was herself bound to say or do in order to keep clear of all participation of the King's misdeeds. . . . The one was a great ecclesiastic, in whom silence or half-hearted condemnation would have been the betrayal of God's cause; the other was one of the simple faithful, in whom

to work ruin and destruction. I think few lords feel safe in this country."<sup>1</sup>

These innocent victims of Henry's baffled fury were arraigned the 3rd of January, 1539, and of course found guilty, and (with the exception of Sir Geoffrey Pole, who was said to have made his peace at the expense of his kindred<sup>2</sup>) were all

to have said what her son was bound to say would have been rashly to throw away her life." This is one view, with which many will agree, even though they think that the martyr cannot be defended for having gone so far as "to take her son for a traitor." Abbot Gasquet, on the other hand, considers Pole's strong language to have been most indiscreet, so that his fiery denunciations simply resulted in hardening Henry in evil. (*Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, ii. p. 8.) But the reasons alleged (*ibid.* p. 5) for supposing that Henry might have improved if Pole had not written, seem very slight when set against the overwhelming proofs before us of the Tudor's perversity and malice.

It was, we may be sure, inevitable that there should have been some difference of opinion with regard to certain proceedings of Rome at this period, when the authorities there had to take action in spite of the interruption of communications with England. The excommunication of Elizabeth is a parallel case, where a decision of great importance had to be taken, although certainty as to the position of affairs in England was not obtainable.

It was not Pole's fault that he was cut off from intercourse with Henry and his victims. Had he been in touch both with the persecutor and the persecuted, his words might have been differently chosen and timed. But however this may be, the real question in these cases was whether God's cause in the world would profit or suffer, if the Church was to look on in absolute silence while Europe was outraged with the sight of such gross crimes passing unrebuked. Even if some of the circumstances of Pole's words turned out to be unfortunate, they were, when broadly considered, only what the situation demanded.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiii. pt. ii. n. 753.

<sup>2</sup> According to Garzias' Chronicle (which, however, is often at fault) Sir Geoffrey did not in the least intend to betray his brother, and was in despair when he found that his incautious admission

barbarously executed. The King did not even spare children, Edward Courtenay, the little son of Lord Exeter, and Henry Pole, the child of Lord Montague, were thrown into the Tower of London.

The grief inflicted on the aged Countess by the murder of her eldest son and other relatives was not enough to satisfy Henry's vengeance. It might have seemed impossible to touch this venerable lady herself. She was venerable for her age, she was a royal princess, she was revered for her virtues; "a lady of virtue and honour, if there be one in England," as Chapuys said, and the King himself, "used often," Pole records, "to say that the kingdom did not contain a nobler woman,"<sup>1</sup> but nothing was sacred to this "Western Turk," and within a short time she too was consigned to captivity.

The King commissioned Fitzwilliam, Earl of Southampton, and Goodrich, Bishop of Ely, to examine her.

She was living at the time at Warblington, near Havant, in Hampshire.<sup>2</sup> There the Bishop and the Earl went to arrest her on the 13th of November, 1538, ten days after the apprehension of her sons. Next day they reported to Cromwell as follows:

that Lord Montague had, at the Cardinal's advice, sought absolution from the Holy See for having taken the oath of supremacy, had brought his brother to the block. This would certainly make his death unmistakably for his religion. (*Chronicle of King Henry VIII. of England*, edited by Major Martin Hume.)

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolæ Poli*, ii. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Some small ruins of her mansion still remain. It was originally a square pile of about two hundred feet surrounding a quadrangle, moated; and had been the seat of the Montacutes.

“Please it your good Lordship to be advertised that as by our other letters we signified to the same we would, so yesterday, the 13th of this November, we travailed with the Lady of Salisbury all day both before and after noon, till almost night. Albeit for all that we could do, though we used her diversely, she would utter and confess little or nothing more than the first day she did, but still stood and persisted in the denial of all together. And this day between viii and ix in the morning, having received your Lordship’s letters dated from Westminster, the said xiii<sup>th</sup>, we forthwith upon receipt of the same eftsoons repaired unto the said lady. And first afore we came to her sight, calling her men-servants afore us, according to the continew of your said letters, we apprehended Standish, and that done went in hand with her. And although we then entreated her in both sorts, some time with doulx and mild words, now roughly and asperly, by traitoring her and her sons to the ix<sup>th</sup> degree, yet will she nothing utter, but making herself clear and as unspotted, utterly denieth all that is object unto her; and that with most stiff and earnest words, saying that if ever it be found and proved in her that she is culpable in any of those things that she hath denied, that she is content to be blazoned in the rest of all the articles laid against her. Surely if it like your Lordship we suppose that there hath not been seen or [heard of] a woman so earnest, . . . so manlike in continuance, . . . and so precise as well in gesture as in words, that wonder is to behold. For in her answer and declaration she behaveth

herself so, . . . all things sincere, pure and upright on her part, that we have conceived and must needs deem and think the one of two things in her. That either her sons have not made her privy nor participant of the bottom and pit of their stomachs, or else that she is the most arrant traitress that ever lived. And now that we have seized her goods, and given her notice that the King's pleasure is she shall go, she seemeth thereat to be somewhat appalled. And therefore we deem that if it may so be, she will then utter somewhat when she is removed. This we intend shall be to-morrow, so that we have caused inventories to be made of her said goods, and of such things as may be easily carried, as plate and other . . . charge. Our purpose is to take them with us. For the rest and for the ordering of her household we have appointed John Chadreton and . . . Steward of Household, whom we take for an honest man, and they shall see to the order and rule thereof: and . . . wait and attend continually thereon, till such time as the King's pleasure be further known from your Lordship therein: but also we have required one White who is farmer of the late priory of Southwyke, Maistre Waite, and Talke, who be all gentlemen and neighbours there, with other the King's servants and faithful subjects to have vigilant eye to the same, that if any stirring or disorder chance or befall, the same by their good means, powers and discretions may be stayed and put in quietness. As for Standish, we shall bring him safe up with us; for being examined nothing can we get him to



confess. Thus the holy Trinity preserve your Lordship. From the Manor of Warblington, the xiiii<sup>th</sup> day of November, late in the night.

“Your Lordship’s assured,

“W. SOUTHAMPTON.

“THOMAS ELIEN.”<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, a further report is sent to Cromwell from Lord Southampton’s seat, Cowdray Park, near Midhurst, to which they have carried the Countess.

“According to the purport of our letters of the xiiii<sup>th</sup> of this November, we have now removed the Lady of Salisbury, and this last night arrived with the same at Cowdray. And where in the same our letters we touched our opinions that being removed she would perhaps utter something more than already she had done, so this shall be to advertise you that since our arrival here, travailing sundry times and after sundry sorts with her, somewhat else of new have we gotten of her which we deem material. And likewise labouring with Standish, have picked out of him more than in the beginning we could, and shall as well thereof as of all other our proceedings, and specially of her gesture and precise answers and declarations to the matters object against her, make your Lordship true report

<sup>1</sup> This letter is printed literatim in Ellis’s *Letters*, Series II. ii. p. 110, and in ample analysis in *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiii. (2), n. 835. The original MS. is partially burnt, but in the above text the obvious corrections have been inserted without the use of square brackets.

at our return. We assure your Lordship we have dealt with such a one as men have not dealt withal to fore us. We may call her rather a strong and constant man than a woman. For in all behaviour, howsoever we have used her, she hath showed herself so earnest, vehement and precise that more could not be: so that we, thinking though we used all industry and diligence to press her to utter more, if any more lay in her stomach, we should but spend time, and not much or nothing prevail, agreed to depart hence towards the King's Majesty and no further to travail at this time. And so being in readiness to take our journey between one and ii. at afternoon, this xvi<sup>th</sup> of November, and even at point to take leave of her, John Chadreton and Whyte whom we appointed with others to take order of her household till the King's pleasure were further known sent us letters wherein were inclosed certain bulls granted by a bishop of Rome which were found in Standish' chamber, with a copy of a letter found in a gentlewoman's chest, made, as it appeareth by tenour thereof, by the said Lady unto the Lord Montague. And forasmuch as the matter comprised therein seemed . . . we have stopped our journey this day to the King, and shall spend the same in . . . eftsoons with her, so that we have examined whether, wherefore, and when she made . . ., and by her examination have tried out [who] wrote the same, and have sent for the . . ., aboutes whose examination we intend to . . . this next day till noon, and so to make no further demore here, but—

putting her in such order and surety here, as the King's pleasure is she should be left in,—with convenient speed to come . . . , and then give you advertisement of all together. Thus the holy Trinity have your Lordship . . . keeping. From Cowdray, the xvi<sup>th</sup> of Novem.

“Your Lordship's assured,

“W. SOUTHAMPTON.

“THOMAS ELIEN.

“To our singular good Lord the Lord Privy Seal, his good Lordship.”<sup>1</sup>

At Cowdray the persecuted lady continued for some months. Here she was subjected to the grossest indignities by her gaoler Southampton, who treated her, as Mr. Gairdner observes, “with barbarous incivility.” This we learn from his own mouth, for in a letter written to Cromwell, March 14, 1539, this man recounts an interview with his prisoner in which he insulted her in the most shocking manner. Neither his wife nor he had been to see the venerable lady since her first coming to Cowdray nearly four months before. She therefore sent a gentleman of the household with an urgent message beseeching the Earl to come and speak with her. He accordingly went and rudely told her that neither his wife nor he could find it in their hearts to see her, when that arrant traitor the Cardinal went about from prince to prince to

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Letters*, Series II. ii. p. 114, *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiii. (2), n. 855.

work trouble to the King and realm.<sup>1</sup> Besides calling the Cardinal a traitor, Southampton applied to him an unquotable epithet which was a direct insult to his mother's virtue. The noble lady thus grossly outraged replied with dignity and meekness. "I beg you," concludes this boorish Earl, "to rid me of her company, for she is both chargeable and troubleth my mind."<sup>2</sup>

Cromwell seems to have replied that she would not trouble him long, for the Earl writes again from Portsmouth:<sup>3</sup> "My wife is proud to hear that your lordship will help to deliver her of the lady of Sarum. I was fain to take her with me to Portsmouth, for in no wise would she tarry behind me, the said lady being in my house."

During Blessed Margaret's imprisonment at Cowdray her rooms and trunks were searched more than once, and in one of her coffer was found the embroidered vestment which was to play such a prominent part in the final tragedy. Nevertheless, she remained so constant that nothing material could be wrung from her, nor could she be entrapped into confessing an imaginary guilt. On April the 12th Cromwell had to write to his master to say that all his examinations had been unsuccessful in eliciting any matter of accusation. He had proved the truth of his own admission that "these . . . have little offended save that he (the Cardinal) is of their kin."

<sup>1</sup> This was Henry's view of Pole's action as Legate.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiv. pt. i. n. 520.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* n. 573.

In this difficulty "Cromwell," says Lingard, "consulted the judges whether a person accused of treason might not be attainted without a previous trial or confession." This shameless proposal met with a mild remonstrance even from Henry's servile judges; they replied that it would form a dangerous precedent; that no inferior tribunal would venture on so illegal a proceeding, but that the Court of Parliament was supreme and an attainder by Parliament would be good in law. This iniquitous course was decided on.

On May the 10th the bill of attainder was introduced in the House of Lords by Cromwell. The slight delay seems to have arisen from a desire to include in the bill fresh names. The bill in fact contained the names of sixteen persons, some of whom had already been murdered; among them were the Blessed Adrian Fortescue, the Venerable Thomas Dingley, three Irish priests "for carrying letters to the Pope," two gentlemen, a Dominican friar and a yeoman who had "named and promulged that venomous serpent the Bishop of Rome as Supreme Head of the Church of England," besides Blessed Margaret, her eldest son, and the Marchioness of Exeter.<sup>1</sup>

The first and second readings were got over the same day and the third on the next. The accused had no opportunity of defence nor were any witnesses examined, but on the third reading Cromwell displayed a tunic of white silk, said to have been found among the Countess's clothes, on

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiv. pt. i. Preface.

which were embroidered the Five Wounds of our Blessed Lord, and which the King affected to believe connected her with the northern risings.<sup>1</sup> This is Lord Herbert's account, and he also tells us that it was stated that "bulls from the Pope were found in the Countess's house, that she kept correspondence with her son (the Cardinal), and that she forbade her tenants to have the New Testament in English or any other of the books that had been published by the King's authority."

On such evidence was the Blessed Martyr condemned by her peers!

From the Lords the bill passed to the Commons, who showed themselves as ready as the Lords to

<sup>1</sup> As to this "tunic" all kinds of different accounts have been given. Some call it a picture, others a dalmatic. A letter in the Public Record Office seems to clear up the matter. It is from John Worth to Lord Lisle, and was written on the 18th of May, 1539, just as the bill of attainder was passing through Parliament, and but a few days after Cromwell's theatrical display of the tunic in the House of Lords. (*Letters and Papers*, vol. xiv. pt. i. n. 980.) "Pleaseth your Lordship so it is there was a coat armour found in the Duchess of Salisbury's coffer, and by the one side of the coat, there was the King's Grace his arms of England, that is the lions without the *fleur de lys*, and about the whole arms was made pansies for Pole and marygolds for my Lady Mary. This was about the coat armour. And betwixt the marygold and the pansy was made a tree to rise in the midst, and on the tree a coat of purple hanging on a bough, in token of the coat of Christ, and on the other side of the coat all the Passion of Christ. Pole intended to have married my Lady Mary, and betwixt them both should again arise the old doctrine of Christ. This was the intent that the coat was made, as it is openly known in the Parliament House, as Master Sir George Speke showed me. And this my Lady Marquess, my Lady Salisbury, Sir Adrian Forskew, Sir Thomas Dingley, with divers others are attainted to die by Act of Parliament. At London, May 18, 1539."

gratify the King's thirst for blood, and the attainder was finally passed the 28th of June, 1539, and on this day the Countess was removed from Cowdray to the gloomy dungeons of the Tower of London. Thus a piece of iniquity was perpetrated which it would be difficult to match in the annals of this country, even in those of this blood-stained period.

Cardinal Pole, on hearing of his mother's condemnation, wrote as follows to Cardinal Contarini, the 22nd of September, 1539:<sup>1</sup>

"You have heard, I believe, of my mother being condemned by public council to death, or rather to eternal life. Not only has he who condemned her condemned to death a woman of seventy, than whom he has no nearer relation except his daughter, and of whom he used to say there was no holier woman in his kingdom, but at the same time, her grandson, son of my brother, a child, the remaining hope of our race. See how far this tyranny has gone, which began with priests, in whose order it only consumed the best, then [went on] to nobles, and there too destroyed the best. At length it has come to women and innocent children; for not only my mother is condemned, but the wife of that marquis who was slain with my brother, whose goodness was famous, and whose little son is to follow her. Comparing these things with what the Turk has done in the East, there is no doubt but that Christians can suffer worse under this Western Turk."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolæ Poli*, ii. 191.

<sup>2</sup> The Pope himself was moved by this last outrage. The Marquis of Aguilar wrote to the Emperor on the 20th of July, 1539 (*Spanish Calendar*, p. 174), that his Holiness urged his Imperial

Meanwhile the aged Countess was kept a close prisoner, the Act which condemned her not being put into force at once. It was even supposed that the King would shrink from the last extremity, and that after a period of detention, the innocent lady would be released. "She was tormented in prison," says Mr. Gairdner, "by the severity of the weather and the insufficiency of her clothing."<sup>1</sup> She had

Majesty to interfere by stopping all intercourse of trade between England and his dominions. "The King of England," he said, "went on with his wicked doings and cruelties. Lately he had sentenced to death the mother of Cardinal Pole, and your Majesty, as head of the other Christian princes, under the circumstances was bound to obey the commands of the Apostolic See." But, whether it was that Charles would not or could not, he certainly did not take any active measures.

<sup>1</sup> It seems that Henry added to the cruelty of his holy cousin's imprisonment neglect even of her personal requirements, and especially that she had not necessary warm clothing, at least for the greater part of her imprisonment, and a petition is extant from one of her jailors begging that her grave needs may be attended to. (M. A. E. Wood, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, iii. 93.) The council books of the latter part of Henry's reign are destroyed. Among the Stow Papers, however, in the British Museum is a copy, as it would appear, of entries from the 10th of August, 1540, to the 7th of October, 1544, and on the 28th of February, 1541, the following entry:

"A letter written to furnish clothes for Lord Lisle; a like letter was written to Shute, the Queen's taylor, to provide and make meet for the late Countess of Sarum, being a prisoner in the Tower, the parcelles of apparell and other necessities ensuinge.

"Imprimis, a nyght gownd furred, a kyrtel of worsted and a peticote furred.

"Item, another gownd of the facon of a nyght gownd of sage lyned with satten of Cypres and faced wt satten.

"Item, a bonnet and a frontelet.

"Item, fower paire of hose.

"Item, fower paire of shoues and one paire of slippers."

It is true she had been at this time nearly two years a prisoner, and even the things ordered may never have reached her.



thus to languish for nearly two years before the hour of final release dawned. The merits of God's servant were to be increased and her preparation for the grace of martyrdom perfected by these weary months of imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

"In April, 1541, there was another insurrection in Yorkshire under Sir John Neville, and on this account apparently it was resolved to put the Countess to death, without any further process, under the Act of Attainder passed two years before."<sup>2</sup> It may also have been that the cause of Henry's sudden determination was some circumstance in Cardinal Pole's career which irritated the King. She was to be the victim of his hatred against the Cardinal, and that hatred was a hatred of fidelity to God and His Church. The cause of her death was the vindictive fury of a bad man because his wicked will was thwarted in the working out of its schemes against the Church's faith and unity. This is indeed equally true, whether the immediate occasion of her death were one or the other circumstance.

<sup>1</sup> The Blessed Margaret is frequently mentioned in Cromwell's *Remembrances*. Thus, "What the King will have done with the Lady of Salisbury." "The diets of young Courtenay and Pole and the Countess of Sarum, and to know the King's pleasure therein." "For the diets of the children in the Tower and also for the Countess of Sarum." "To remember specially the Lady of Sarum," are some of these ominous notes which even now by their business-like brevity strike the reader with a kind of horror. Blessed Margaret was specially excepted from the King's general pardon of the 16th of July, 1540.

<sup>2</sup> Gairdner, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Early in the morning of May the 27th<sup>1</sup> the news was brought to the venerable lady that she was to die that very hour. It was totally unexpected, for it must be remembered that she had never been put to trial. She could hardly believe the news at first, and protested that no crime had been imputed to her, but soon, resigning herself to what she saw was the divine will, she walked with a firm step from her prison cell to the place of execution. This was not the usual public one on Tower Hill, but on East Smithfield Green, which was within the precincts of the Tower. The Lord Mayor and a small company were present to witness the martyrdom. No scaffold had been erected; there was but a low block or log of wood. The Countess devoutly commended her soul to God, and asked the bystanders to pray for the King and Queen, Prince Edward, and the Princess Mary. She desired to be commended to them all, but especially to her beloved god-child, Princess Mary, to whom she sent her last blessing.

She was then commanded to make haste and lay her head upon the block, which she did.

The regular executioner being busy in the north, "a wretched and blundering youth (*garçonneau*) had been chosen to take his place, who literally

<sup>1</sup> So Gairdner, following Wriothesley, Stow, &c. The former chronicler says it was on "the seven and twentieth day of May, 1541, being Friday and the morrow after Ascension day." On the other hand, the *Grey Friars Chronicle* agrees with de Marillac (*vide infra*) that the execution took place on May the 28th.

hacked her head and shoulders to pieces in the most pitiful manner."<sup>1</sup>

Her last words were, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake."

The Blessed Margaret thus won a crown more brilliant than those of earth. It was a grand end for a kingly race; for Margaret was the last in direct descent of the line of Plantagenet. Her cruel martyrdom caused universal sorrow, and a feeling of horror and dismay at the King's unbridled and savage tyranny.

Chapuy's wrote to the Queen of Hungary (June 10, 1541):<sup>2</sup> "Since my last of the 26th of May, the news of this place is, that on the 27th following three of the chief promoters of the last conspiracy in the northern counties—an Abbot and two gentlemen—were hung and quartered. About the same time the very strange and lamentable execution

<sup>1</sup> This is Chapuy's account. Mr. Gairdner says it is evidently more trustworthy than that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who is responsible for the well-known story that when told to lay her head on the block, the Countess replied, "So should traitors do, and I am none." The executioner still insisting, she still refused, and "turning her grey head every way she bid him if he would have her head to get at it as he could, and thus she was literally hacked to death." (*Life of Henry VIII.*, by Lord Herbert, p. 532.) Though Lord Herbert professes to derive his account from an eye-witness, it is no doubt a mistaken one. Probably the terrible scene of butchery that must have so shocked the witnesses was afterwards attributed to the obstinate refusal of the sufferer to lay her neck on the block, whereas it was in reality due to the blundering incompetence of the executioner.

I think it will be generally felt that the true story is more in accordance with the calm dignity of the royal martyr than the fictitious one.

<sup>2</sup> *Spanish Calendar*, p. 331.

of Madame de Salisbury, the daughter of the Duke of Clarence and mother of Cardinal Pole, took place at the Tower, in the presence of the Lord Mayor of London and about 150 persons more. At first when this sentence of death was made known to her, she found the thing very strange, not knowing of what crime she was accused nor how she had been sentenced; but at last, perceiving that there was no remedy, and that die she must, she went out of the dungeon where she was detained and walked towards the midst of the space in front of the Tower. . . . May God in His high mercy pardon her soul, for certainly she was a most virtuous and honourable lady, and there was no need for haste to bring so ignominious a death upon her, considering that as she was then nearly ninety years old, she could not,<sup>1</sup> in the ordinary course of nature, live long. When her death had been resolved upon, her grandson, the son of Mr. de Montagu [Sir Henry Pole], who had occasionally permission to go about within the precincts of the Tower, was placed in close confinement, and it is supposed he will soon follow his father and grandmother. May God help him!"

Marillac, the French Ambassador, wrote as follows to Francis I. (May 29, 1541):<sup>2</sup> "To begin with a case more worthy of compassion than of long letters, the Countess of Salisbury, was yesterday morning, about seven o'clock, beheaded in a corner of the Tower, in presence of so few

<sup>1</sup> She was in reality only about seventy.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. xiv. pt. ii. n. 868.

people that until evening the truth was still doubted. It was the more difficult to believe, as she had been long prisoner, was of noble lineage, was above eighty years old, and had been punished by the loss of one son and the attainder of the other, and the total ruin of her house. The manner of proceeding in her case . . . seems to argue that those here are afraid to put to death publicly those whom they execute in secret. It may be added that yesterday all the heads which were fixed on the bridge of the river which passes by this city were taken down, in order that the people may forget those whose heads keep their memory fresh. Perhaps, however, the place will now be peopled anew, for I hear that before St. John's tide they reckon to empty the Tower of the prisoners now there for treason."

But if the martyrdom of Blessed Margaret caused so much compassion and indignation among strangers, how will it have affected the noble son, for whose loyalty to God's Church his mother had to pay so cruel a penalty? The Cardinal was at Viterbo, as Governor of the Province of the Patrimony of St. Peter, when the news reached him. His secretary, Beccatelli, has described the scene. "He had received," he writes, "several letters from France, Spain, and Flanders, and having read them, he called me, as his custom was, to return the answers. As I was putting them together I perceived one to be in English, and told him I need not take that with me, as I did not understand the language. To which he replied, without the least

emotion, 'I could wish you did, that you might read the good news it contains;' and on my replying, 'I hope your Excellence will make me partaker of it,' 'Hitherto,' he said, 'I have thought myself indebted to the divine goodness for having received my birth from one of the most noble and virtuous women in England; but from henceforward my obligation will be much greater, for I understand that I am now the son of a martyr. . . . May God's will be done, and may He in all events be thanked and praised.' And on my being seized with surprise and horror at this relation, 'Be of good courage,' he said, 'we have now one patron more added to those we already had in Heaven.'"<sup>1</sup>

The Cardinal naturally received many expressions of sympathy from his friends, and specially from his brethren in the Sacred College. To the Cardinal of Burgos he wrote (August 1, 1541)<sup>2</sup> that the more remote natural remedies were, the nearer was the aid of God, and this he had felt specially in his mother's death. He would have grieved for her had she died in the course of nature, but when she met with such a violent death, at the hands of him whom it least became—(who thus slew the cousin of his own mother, and one whom for her piety, in which she had grown old, he once venerated no less than his mother)—his consolation was that there was nothing left in nature to console him. The manner of death might be thought base, but all who knew her would impute the baseness to him who slew her. It could not be base to suffer as Christ Himself,

<sup>1</sup> Beccatelli, *Vita Poli*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistolæ Poli*, iii. 35.

the Apostles, Martyrs, and Virgins had suffered, but to act as the Herods, Neros, Caligulas had acted, was shameful, and their guilt was exceeded by that of this man, who, with much less show of justice, had slain a most innocent woman, allied to him in blood, aged and feeble, but renowned for her virtue. He adds that he will never fear to call himself the son of a martyr, and that this is more glorious than any royal birth.

The Cardinal of S. Marcellus wrote to urge him "to pray for the conversion of the doer of this wickedness." Pole replied that such advice was worthy of him who held the office of Grand Penitentiary. He would indeed pray for him, though it was almost to be feared that he was past the benefit of prayer. Nevertheless, Pole protested, that if his own death would bring about the King's salvation, he was willing to be slain forthwith.

Of the Blessed Martyr's descendants, the male line seems to have died out early in the seventeenth century. She has, however, many descendants at the present day. Her grandchild, Catharine, Lord Montague's eldest daughter, married Francis Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon, and after a direct descent as far as the ninth Earl, Elizabeth, surviving heiress of this line, married John, first Earl of Moira, and, as Baroness Hastings in her own right, transmitted the martyr's blood to the present Earl of Loudoun, and his brothers and sisters, who are thus the representatives in the senior line of the Blessed Margaret.

Before her attainder the martyr had built a

chantry chapel on the north side of the chancel of the Priory Church, Christchurch, Hants, in which she intended to be buried. Henry VIII. ordered Cromwell to destroy the badges of the Plantagenets which ornamented it. But the religious emblems, among which appear the Five Wounds, Cromwell's solitary pretext for her attainder, have been left uninjured.<sup>1</sup>

The martyr's relics lie in the gloomy chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, within the precincts of the Tower. Here they were found at the restoration of the chapel in 1877, and they now rest in front of the communion-table in company with the remains of Anne Boleyn, Katharine Howard, and many other victims of Henry VIII., though none of them so noble and so innocent as the Blessed Margaret Plantagenet. The bones are of almost

<sup>1</sup> The commissioners who suppressed the Priory (Robert Southwell, John London, &c.), report to Cromwell (December 2, 1539), "In this church we found a chapel and monument curiously made of Caen stone, prepared by the *late* mother of Raynold Pole for her burial [the Countess was still alive, but after her attainder was accounted as dead], which we have caused to be defaced and all the arms and badges clearly to be delete." (Wright's *Suppression of the Monasteries*, Camden Society, p. 231.) Christchurch seems to have been the martyr's favourite place of residence. Her splendid chantry is still the chief glory of the grand old Priory Church. One of the mutilated bosses of the fan-tracery of its roof is a representation of the coronation of our Lady. Over the space left for the altar is a shield bearing the Five Wounds. The whole chapel is in the richest Perpendicular Gothic, and resembles in style the chapel of Henry VII. in Westminster Abbey. Some of the exquisitely carved details are not Gothic, but of the style of the early Renaissance, and it would seem likely that Italian workmen had a hand in the decoration. This lovely shrine has unfortunately never contained the treasure for which it was built.



gigantic size, thus confirming the tradition as to the martyr's lofty stature. Unfortunately this has caused them to attract special attention, and with a painful lack of reverence the thighbone of Blessed Margaret was lately shown as a curiosity to an Oriental Potentate who was visiting this country. It may be permitted to express an earnest hope that at some not far-distant date these sacred relics may be given up to Catholic guardianship, so that translated to a more fitting shrine, they may receive that public veneration which is due to them.

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

E. S. K.

ED.

PORTRAIT.—A portrait of Blessed Margaret Pole exists. It belongs to Lord Loudoun.

AUTHORITIES.—*Letters and Papers* contain many papers relating to our martyrs, especially relative to her arrest, for which space could not be found in this paper. There are other papers in Mary Anne Everett Green, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*.

Pole's letters, *Epistolæ Reginaldi Poli, et aliorum ad ipsum*, Brixia 1744—57, are of prime importance for the illustration of the cause for which Blessed Margaret suffered—copies of a considerable number of still inedited letters from him may now be found among the *Roman Transcripts* at the Record Office.

There is a life by James Gairdner in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, xlv. p. 28, and another by G. Ambrose Lee. (C.T.S. 1887.) The latter contains a chart of her descendants.

In the *Louvain Chronicle* (now being printed at Chudleigh, Devon, in the *Poor Souls' Friend*), will be found a notice of Mary, grand-daughter of Sir Geoffrey Pole, in which some interesting family traditions about the Martyr and her son Sir Geoffrey are briefly recorded. (July, 1903, p. 121.)

XV.

**THE BLESSED JOHN LARKE,**  
*SECULAR PRIEST;*  
**AND THE BLESSED GERMAN GARDINER,**  
*LAYMAN.*

*Tyburn, 7 March, 1545.*

THE Blessed John Larke must have been far advanced in years when, in reward of his long and faithful service in the priesthood, he was permitted to sacrifice his life for the faith.

So early as the year 1504 he was presented to the small rectory of St. Ethelburga, Bishopsgate, a benefice which he retained until a few years before his death. In 1526 he was presented to the rectory of Woodford in Essex, but this he resigned when Sir Thomas More nominated him to that of Chelsea in 1530. Sir Thomas was at that time Lord Chancellor, and in that capacity had the right of appointment by a grant from the Abbot and Convent of Westminster.

By some writers the Blessed John has been called the chaplain of the Blessed Thomas More, but this seems rather to mean that he was the parish priest of the place of his ordinary residence, and that

it was in his church that he was accustomed to attend the divine offices.

In default of all details as to the life and ministry of the future martyr, the patronage of the Blessed Thomas may be considered as a sufficient attestation to his merits. Most assuredly he would never willingly have been the means of promoting to the care of souls any one whom he deemed unworthy of such an office, and his experience of human nature was too great to allow him to be deceived by mere outward appearance of virtue.

It is evident that the esteem which the two martyrs had for one another, was perfectly reciprocal, and that Larke held his illustrious parishioner in the highest veneration. In the life of the latter it is said that "his death so wrought on the mind of Doctor Larke, his own parish priest, that he, following the example of his own sheep, afterwards suffered a most famous martyrdom, for the same cause of the Supremacy."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless a considerable interval elapsed between the two martyrdoms, and it was not until the year 1545 that the final test was offered to the Blessed John Larke.<sup>2</sup> It appears that he was tried at the same time with the Blessed German Gardiner and the Venerable John Ireland, priest. According to the indictment they were charged with treason against the King, in respect of his dignity, title and name of Supreme Head of the Church of England and Ireland, by their words, writings and acts.

<sup>1</sup> Cresacre More's *Life of More* (1726), p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> *Coram Rege* Roll, 36 Henry VIII. rot. ii. quoted below.

The condemnation followed after the usual manner, but the Blessed John Larke consummated his martyrdom at Tyburn on the 7th of March, 1544-5, in company with the Blessed German Gardiner and the Venerable John Ireland.

## *II. Blessed German Gardiner.*

The Blessed German, or Jermyn, Gardiner was a secretary of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, whose relative he probably was. By some writers he is called a priest; but this seems to be an error, as those who are likely to be better informed, speak of him as a layman.

He was a zealous adherent of the ancient faith, and wrote a letter<sup>1</sup> against the heresies of John Frith, which was published by W. Rastall, and is dated from Ashare [? Esher], the 1st of August, 1534. The title was "A letter of a young gentleman named Master German Gardiner, wherein men may see the demeanour and heresy of John Frith, late burned; and also the disputations and reasonings upon the same, between the same German Gardiner and him."

The following extract tells us something of his aversion to the nascent heresies of those days. "Ye have heard how John Fryth, sometime scholar in that College whereof ye were after his departing master, was afterwards among other at Oxenford found busy in setting abroad these heresies, which lately sprung in Alemanyne, by the help of such folk

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. n. 1606. (From Greville Library, 11,990.)

be spread abroad into sundry parts of Christendom, tending to nothing else but to the division and rending asunder of Christ's mystical body, His Church, the pulling down of all power and utter subversion of all common-wealths. He was punished and fled beyond sea to the Fathers of that religion, but came again into England, encouraged others to stand stiff in heresy, and was imprisoned in the Tower. Yet he wrote against the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar, and though advised to abstain from such high matters, the advice came too late."<sup>1</sup>

At a later date (1543), he was employed in preparing or copying the articles alleged against Cranmer,<sup>2</sup> and himself gave evidence against him, though those proceedings had no result in consequence of another change in the mind of the capricious King.

Though years elapsed before the Blessed German's fidelity was put to the final test, there is no reason to suppose that his constancy ever failed. He had meanwhile fortified his principles and his courage with the example of the many sufferers in the holy cause who had preceded him. Of all these, the Blessed Thomas More was the martyr who especially won his admiration, and whose steps he most desired to follow, as being, like himself, a layman.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Tanner (*Bibliotheca*, 1748, p. 308) refers to H. Stabrydge (probably an alias for John Bale, Protestant Bishop of Ossory), *Epistel exhortatorye . . . agaynst the pompeuse popysh bishops* (Basyle, 1544), as having controverted Gardiner's book.

<sup>2</sup> Strype's *Cranmer*, pp. 163—168.

<sup>3</sup> Cresacre More's *Life of More* (1726), p. 278.

In the Life of that holy man it is said, "German Gardiner, an excellent, learned and holy layman, coming to suffer death for the same supremacy some eight years after, avouched at his end before all the people that the holy simplicity of the Blessed Carthusians, the wonderful learning of the Bishop of Rochester, and the singular wisdom of Sir Thomas More, had stirred him up to that courage; but the rest seemed not so much to be imitated of laymen, being all belonging to the clergy, as this famous man, being clogged with a wife and children."

In God's good time the day came on which the Blessed German was to witness his good confession. He was required to take the oath of the Royal Supremacy, and on his refusal was indicted, together with the Blessed John Larke and others, for attempting treason against the King in the matter of his dignity, title, and name of Supreme Head of the Church of England and Ireland, by words, writings, and acts. The record runs as follows:<sup>1</sup>

"[After reciting the Royal Commission of oyer and terminer]. The sessions were held at Westminster, on Wednesday, the 15th day of February, in the 35th year of King Henry VIII. (1545), &c.

"The Jury say upon their oath that John Heywood, late of London, gentleman, John Ireland, late of Eltham in the county of Kent, clerk, John Larke, late of Chelsea in the county of Middlesex, clerk, and German Gardiner, late of Southwark in the county of Surrey, gentleman, not weighing the

<sup>1</sup> R.O. Coram Rege Roll, 36 Henry VIII. Mich. n. 143, rot. ii.

duties of their allegiances, nor keeping God Almighty before their eyes, but seduced by the instigation of the devil, falsely, maliciously, and traitorously, like false and wicked traitors against the most serene and christian Prince, our Lord Henry VIII.—by the grace of God King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and upon earth Supreme Head of the English and Irish Church—choosing, wishing, and desiring, and cunningly machinating, inventing, practising, and attempting—that is each of them by himself falsely, maliciously, &c., choosing, wishing, &c., and attempting—together with many other false traitors unknown in confederacy with them—to deprive our said King Henry VIII. of his royal dignity, title, and state, that is to say of his dignity, title, and name of ‘Supreme Head of the English and Irish Church,’ which has been united and annexed to his imperial crown by the laws and proclamations of this his realm of England. [This they have attempted] falsely and traitorously by words, writings, and deeds, which are notorious and public. Moreover, that falsely and traitorously, and contrary to the duty of their allegiances, [they attempted] to depose and deprive the same Lord our King of his majesty, state, power, and royal dignity, and also falsely and traitorously with all their force and power [endeavoured] to subvert, frustrate, and annihilate the good and praiseworthy statutes and ordinances of our aforesaid Lord the King made and provided for the estate, properties, government, and rule of this his said realm of England.”

The conviction was easily obtained, and the martyrdom was consummated at Tyburn on the 7th of March, 1545. John Ireland suffered with Larke and Gardiner, and his name is included among the "Venerables." But Heywood, after having been laid upon the hurdle, recanted and was pardoned. Thus we see that our martyrs too might, presumably, have saved their lives at the cost of denying their faith.

Burnet remarks that this was the last instance of what he calls the King's *severity* on the professors of the Catholic faith. This is not literally true, as there still remained a few who were to suffer; nevertheless it was the beginning of a change in the temper or policy of Henry, who from that time turned his thoughts to the extirpation of some of the Protestant sects, which, through his own rebellion against the Church, had taken root in the land.

R. S.

AUTHORITIES.—Besides those already quoted in the text, the reader may consult for Larke, Faulkner's *History of Chelsea*, and for Gardiner, Maitland, *The Reformation*, pp. 311, 312, who quotes Foxe and Strype on the martyr's relations with his kinsman the Bishop of Winchester, whom they erroneously allege to have lost the King's favour after his secretary's martyrdom.



ALPHABETICAL LIST OF THE MARTYRS WHOSE  
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Cook, Hugh (or Faringdon); <i>Abbot O.S.B.</i>	358
Davy, John; <i>Carthusian</i>	259
Exmew, William; <i>Carthusian</i>	37
Eynon, John; <i>Benedictine</i>	369 & 384
Faringdon, Hugh (or Cook); <i>Abbot O.S.B.</i>	358
Fetherston, Richard; <i>Secular Priest</i>	496
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Green, Thomas; <i>Carthusian</i>	259
Greenwood, William; <i>Carthusian</i>	260 & 267
Haile, John; <i>Secular Priest</i>	17
Horne, William; <i>Carthusian</i>	260 & 264
Houghton, John; <i>Carthusian</i>	1
James, Roger; <i>Benedictine</i>	357
Johnson, Thomas; <i>Carthusian</i>	259
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Marshall, Thomas (or John Beche); <i>Abbot O.S.B.</i>	387
Middlemore, Humphrey; <i>Carthusian</i>	37 & 44
More, Sir Thomas; <i>Layman</i>	123
Newdigate, Sebastian; <i>Carthusian</i>	37 & 42
Pierson, Walter; <i>Carthusian</i>	260
Pole, Margaret; <i>Countess of Salisbury</i>	502
Powell, Edward; <i>Secular Priest</i>	484
Redyng, Thomas; <i>Carthusian</i>	260
Reynolds, Richard; <i>Bridgettine</i>	27
Rochester, John; <i>Carthusian</i>	249
Rugge, John; <i>Benedictine</i>	384
Salt, Robert; <i>Carthusian</i>	260
Scryven, Thomas; <i>Carthusian</i>	260
Stone, John; <i>Augustinian Friar</i>	269
Thorne, John; <i>Benedictine</i>	357
Walworth, James; <i>Carthusian</i>	249
Webster, Augustine; <i>Carthusian</i>	9
Whiting, Richard; <i>Abbot O.S.B.</i>	327

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